Young Children, Schooling and Literacy
An ethnographic study of literacy practices in a London primary school

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Abstract

This thesis adopts a Literacy as a Social Practice perspective to challenge dominant assumptions about the relationship between young children, literacy and schooling. It takes an ethnographic approach to data collection and analysis to explore what it is like to be a five-year-old child encountering the literacy curriculum in a West London primary school in the 21st Century. The thesis argues that young children's reproduction of literacy practices in schooling can be understood through the application of William Corsaro's theorisation of 'interpretive reproduction'. From this perspective, children's interpretive reproduction of in-school literacy practices is contingent upon their interpretations of the social world of the classroom. Within this social world, differing values, attitudes and beliefs about literacy co-exist in the same social space. The thesis concentrates on: a) the dominant 'schooled literacy', which is explored through the use of Foucault's theorisation of schools as disciplinary institutions; and b) the children's in-class peer culture literacy, which is explored through Corsaro's theorisation of interpretive reproduction. The thesis presents ethnographic data that shows how the children in Amber Class negotiated this complex world through the interpretive reproduction of literacy practices especially adapted to the classroom. A close and detailed analysis of these practices demonstrates that, alongside their acquisition of 'basic skills' in schooling, many children learn to manage the procedures and practices of the dominant schooled literacy in ways that enable them to maintain their own in-class peer culture priorities. The thesis argues that the complexity of these practices means that more attention should be paid in literacy education policy to young children's interpretations of the literacy curriculum they encounter in schooling and the effects of those interpretations on their acquisition and practices of literacy.

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Acknowledgements

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Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Meaning
UK Government agencies	
The UK Government Department responsible for Education has had many name changes. Below are the abbreviated versions of the names it has had that are referred to in this thesis	
DfEE	Department for Education and Employment
DCSF	Department for Children, Schools and Families
DfE	Department for Education
Other UK government agencies	
PNS	Primary National Strategies
OFSTED	Office for Standards in Education
QCA	Qualifications and Curriculum Authority
UK schooling terms	
IWB	Interactive White Board - an electronic classroom visual aid
FSWB	Free Standing White Board – a 'write-on wipe off' classroom visual aid
SPAG	Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar
Research terms	
LSP	Literacy as a Social Practice
Methods Terms	
DVR	Digital Voice Recorder
BTM	Bluetooth Microphone

Transcription symbols

Symbol	Meaning
[	beginning of overlapping talk
]	end of overlapping talk
=	latching - talk following on without a pause
:	sound stretch
:::	more prolonged sound stretch
–	cut off
(.)	pause
°	quieter speech
HELP	heavily emphasised speech
(s'pose so)	unclear talk
(s'pose so/spoke to)	possible hearings of unclear talk
(^^^)	unrecognisable talk
((sitting down))	description of conversational scene
/r/	a letter sound (i.e. when 'sounding out a written word to read or spell)

Drawn from Hutchby and Wooffitt (1998) p. vi - vii

Introduction Young Children, Schooling and Literacy

This thesis challenges dominant assumptions about the relationship between young children, schooling and literacy. Within such assumptions, schooling guides children through a universal process of the acquisition of basic skills in literacy as they progress through schooled institutions. I argue that a problem with this view of young children, schooling and literacy is that it pays only limited attention to children's creative, purposeful engagement with the processes of being taught to read and write in schools. This thesis explores this creative, purposeful engagement in order to address the research question:

What happens when young children encounter schooled literacy?

In this thesis 'schooled literacy' is taken to be a particular set of practices and assumptions about literacy that is found in institutions of mass schooling in modern nation states. It has been identified by writers studying Literacy as a Social Practice (cf Street 1984; Street and Street 1995; Barton 2007; Papen 2016.) I shall discuss the term in more detail in Chapter 1 (1.2.1) of this thesis.

In exploring young children's encounter with this schooled literacy, this thesis generates insights into a) young children's perspective on being taught literacy in schools; b) the relationship between those perspectives and the organisational machinery of mass education and c) the relationship between those perspectives and the practices of literacy young children develop in classroom contexts.

My research question arose from my experience of working professionally in schools and Local Education Authorities in West London for some twenty years before beginning my doctoral studies. As well as being a classroom teacher, I had been a school leader for literacy in three West London primary schools and Primary National Strategies' 'literacy consultant' for two London Boroughs. The aspiration of the

educational policies that I implemented in these roles was to ensure that all children of Primary School age (3 – 11 in the UK) attained a particular set of skills and knowledge in literacy by particular stages in their school career. These policies focused on developing what was referred to as 'best [pedagogical] practice' in areas such as designing literacy lessons; marking children's completed work; asking children questions to develop their knowledge; or providing effective models of efficient processes of reading and writing. However, much of my work in schools was concerned with what *adults* such as myself did within the machinery of mass education in order to 'raise standards' in literacy. The children were assumed to share adults' aims for each literacy lesson, and to benefit from our 'best practice' in teaching literacy by acquiring literacy skills and knowledge that they could take away from school and use in any part of their lives where they needed to engage with texts.

However the focus on ***adults'*** classroom practices meant that limited attention was paid to what *children* made of the processes of being taught to read and write. As I observed children engaging with literacy activities in classrooms I became interested in questions such as: What did the children think was going on when they were taught literacy in school? Why did they engage with literacy lessons in the way they did? What did they consider to be a positive outcome for the time they spent engaged in school-assigned literacy activities? The importance of such questions can be illustrated with the following observation of a group of seven-year-old children engaged in completing a school-assigned writing task that I made on a visit to a West London primary school:

> A group of 7 year old children, judged within schooling to be 'lower attaining' in writing, have been set a writing task during a formal literacy lesson in a West London school. In order to fit in to the timings of the lesson as a whole, the children have twenty minutes to complete the task. To keep the children to time, the teacher has set a countdown timer on the classroom's Interactive White Board (IWB). The children have been set a target to write at least five sentences in the twenty minutes allotted to them. Although I am observing them, the teacher is not – she is engaged with another group of children in a different part of the classroom. As the twenty minutes begins, the group of children all seem to engage with the task set, writing two or three

> sentences before stopping to discuss other unrelated matters until they note that time is running out. Then they proceed to write the remainder of the required sentences, with most of them finishing the task before the timer runs out.

This incident illustrates the features of the relationship between young children, schooling and literacy that I will discuss in this thesis. Firstly, whilst the writing task was important to the adults in the room, it was not the most important thing to the children. Their discussion of an unrelated topic was at least of equal importance. Thus it could not be assumed that the adults and children shared the same *values, attitudes and beliefs* about the literacy task that the children had been set. Secondly, all the children engaged with the task in the same way, beginning with writing, then moving to the unrelated discussion, then continuing with the writing when they noted the time was running out. This suggested that the children as a *peer group* had shared ideas about the best way of completing the writing. Thirdly, the children's ideas about the best way of completing the task were not limited to how best to use the 'basic skills' of grammar, punctuation and spelling the school had been teaching; they also included the need to manage the *organisational* aspects of the lesson – the amount of time allowed for the task, the lack of direct observation by the class teacher and the minimum requirement for the length of the completed text. Finally, these organisational aspects of the task were features of literacy activities that were specifically linked to the *social context* of the primary school. There are not many social contexts outside of schooling in which a group of people judged to have the same level of competency in literacy would be seated together and set a writing task that has to be completed in a certain amount of time and be of a particularly specified length. Thus the children's engagement with this school assigned writing task revealed a complex relationship between young children, schooling and literacy that I felt required further investigation.

Observations such as this were commonplace in my classroom experience. I noted that even the youngest children were doing their best to manage the experience of being taught to read and write in school in order to reconcile it with their own interests and

priorities. However, current UK education policy initiatives to 'raise standards' in literacy involved, then as now, assumptions about young children as passively requiring the close supervision of adults to ensure they remain on a universal path to literacy. This universal path is assumed to consist of the staged acquisition of 'basic skills' in literacy. From this perspective it is reasonable to assume that the success or otherwise of school's pedagogical practices can be judged on the regular testing, or in this thesis *examination*, of children's 'basic skills' in literacy, as it has been in UK government policy for the last thirty years (cf Stannard and Huxford 2007; Mattei 2012; Mansell 2011). Most recently, the UK government has introduced new tests for Key Stage 1 children (aged 5 - 7) in discrete skills of phonics (Phonics Screening Check introduced in 2012) and grammar and spelling (Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar - 'SPAG' - test introduced 2016)[1].

Whilst this thesis does not deny the importance of these 'basic skills' it does seek to reposition them in wider social processes, such as those illustrated in the example above. As well as deploying 'basic skills' to complete their texts, the children in the example were engaged in an active, creative process which included their values, attitudes and beliefs about what they were doing, their perception of their social context, which in this case included the organisational procedures of schooling, and the demands of their social relationships within their peer group. In this thesis I have found that the best way to understand this complex process is as a 'literacy practice', a concept drawn from a theorisation of Literacy as a Social Practice (LSP) (cf Street 1984, Barton and Hamilton 1998). A key feature of literacy practices is that they are contingent on people's interpretation of their immediate social context and their priorities for, and perceptions of, what would constitute successful participation in that context.

[1] For details of current English testing arrangements for primary schools see https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/standards-and-testing-agency.

My study of young children's encounter with schooled literacy therefore takes an LSP perspective to investigate the literacy practices of young children in a specific classroom context – that of a Year 1 (aged 5 - 6) class in a West London School in the early twenty first century. The focus of the thesis is how such practices incorporate firstly the children's classroom peer culture values attitudes and beliefs about literacy and schooling; and secondly the relationship between those classroom peer culture values attitudes and beliefs and the organisational procedures and practices that shape the literacy curriculum in schools. In doing so this study makes a valuable contribution to knowledge about how young children acquire literacy in the social context of the primary school classroom.

Chapter 1 presents three theoretical perspectives that challenge dominant assumptions about the relationship between young children, literacy and schooling and support my exploration of young children's literacy practices in the classroom. Firstly, as I highlighted above, literacy is understood from a Literacy as a Social Practice (LSP) perspective (cf Street 1984; Barton and Hamilton 1998). This positions the literacy young children encounter in schooling in the social world of the classroom and offers a useful perspective on how human agents in general engage with literacy. Secondly William Corsaro's (2005, 2011) conceptualisation of children's engagement with the social world as involving processes of interpretive reproduction provides a helpful way of describing how young children in particular reproduce literacy practices. From such a perspective, this thesis is able to show how young children's interpretive reproduction of literacy practices in the classroom unfolds in their participation in the social world. Thirdly the work of Foucault (1977) helps to explore the relationship between the everyday organisational practices and procedures of organising the teaching of literacy in schools and their effects on the literacy practices that young children reproduce in classroom contexts.

Adopting an LSP view of literacy necessitates taking an ethnographic approach to data collection and analysis. Such a view seeks to understand the values, attitudes and beliefs people hold for literacy and its role in their everyday lives (Barton and Hamilton 1998). **Chapter 2** describes how, in order to study literacy practices within schools, I made weekly visits to Amber Classroom, a Year 1 (age 5-6) class in North West London, observing practices of literacy and collecting a range of ethnographic data. Analysis of the data collected on these visits suggested two lines of inquiry that I address in this thesis. The first of these is the relationship between the dominant assumptions, or *discourses* of literacy described at the beginning of this chapter and the organisational practices and procedures of schools. **Chapter 3** addresses this first line of inquiry, drawing on the work of Michel Foucault (1977) to present an analysis of the schooled procedures and practices that organised the teaching of literacy in Amber Classroom as *disciplinary technologies.* This analysis shows firstly how such disciplinary technologies are intended to bring dominant assumptions of schooling and literacy to act directly on the literacy practices of young children in schools; and secondly how those technologies are visible to young children encountering schooled literacy and thus have the potential to be incorporated into those children's literacy practices.

The second line of inquiry that I address in this thesis is the relationship between the schooled literacy that is produced through the implementation of these disciplinary technologies and the ways in which Amber Class children practised literacy in the classroom. **Chapter 4** describes how this relationship is best understood as what Corsaro would call the interpretive reproduction (cf Corsaro 2005, 2011) of literacy practices. It describes how Amber Class children's encounter with schooled literacy necessitates their reproduction of literacy practices specifically created to meet what they perceive to be the demands of the social world within the classroom. In systems of mass schooling, this social world includes the disciplinary technologies described in Chapter 3.

Chapters 5 – 7 describe the literacy practices that Amber Class children interpretively reproduced in their encounter with schooled literacy. **Chapter 5** shows how the children's interpretive reproduction of in-school literacy practices within their in-class peer culture were contingent upon the children's interpretation of the institutional context of schooling. It describes the children's shared and stable practice of peer-to-peer copying, which involved a set of special requirements that related to the children's interpretation of the priorities for practising literacy in school. **Chapter 6** highlights a contrast between schooled and in-class peer culture practices of managing children's relative expertise in literacy. Whilst schools apply the disciplinary technology of 'ranking' to organise children according to their relative 'ability', within Amber Class children's peer culture at least some children engaged in the reciprocal sharing of expertise in order to complete schooled literacy tasks. **Chapter 7** shows how the children in Amber Class created the appearance of aligning with schooled values, attitudes and beliefs about literacy, whilst maintaining their own values, attitudes and beliefs about literacy and schooling. It shows how the children recognised the *examining* role of adults in the classroom and adapted their literacy practices in order to make particular aspects of literacy that the children judged to be valued within schooled literacy available to those adults' *surveillance*. Other practices of literacy, which were less valued within schooling, but nonetheless valued and useful within the children's in-class peer culture, were made less visible or concealed from this surveillance. **Chapter 8** concludes the thesis by considering the implications of my theoretical perspective for understanding the relationship between young children, schooling and literacy in the light of the current policy initiatives that shape the pedagogical practices of primary schools in England.

The thesis as a whole argues that wider perspectives are required on the relationship between young children, schooling and literacy in order to more adequately inform UK education policy on the teaching of literacy to young children.

Chapter 1 Understanding Young Children's Encounter with Schooled Literacy

In this chapter, I argue that the discourses of young children, schooling and literacy that are dominant in the system of schooling in the UK are insufficient to account for the complexity of young children's engagement with schooled literacy tasks in the social context of the classroom. I suggest that applying alternative discourses and theoretical perspectives to explore this complexity can allow for the generation of new insights into, and questions about, how children develop literacy practices in systems of state schooling.

My starting point for this exploration was the research question:

'What happens when young children encounter schooled literacy?'

I have found that addressing such a question entails a consideration of the relationship between literacy, schooling and young children. Within dominant discourses *schooling* is assumed to support *children* by providing literacy curricula that guide them along a universal path to *literacy* acquisition. In this chapter I suggest that such assumptions are insufficient to support an exploration of young children's encounter with literacy in schooled institutions. This chapter describes the three theoretical perspectives that I have found to be more helpful in exploring this relationship. These are: a) a theorisation of *Literacy* as a Social Practice (LSP) which is contingent on people's interpretations of the social contexts within which they engage with texts (Street 1984; Barton and Hamilton 1998; Barton 2007); b) a theorisation of *schooling* as a disciplinary institution arising with the formation of modern nation states (Foucault 1977); and c) a theorisation of *children's* engagement with the social world as interpretive reproduction (Corsaro 2005, 2011). I argue that these perspectives offer a wider view of the relationship between children, literacy and schooling than that found in the current

dominant discourse and thus support the generation of further questions and insights that have the potential to enhance our understanding of the literacy practices of young children in schools. Before describing these perspectives in turn, I offer an overview of the current dominant discourses of the relationship between literacy, schooling and young children and their influence on current UK education policy.

1.1 The dominant discourses of mainstream literacy research

When designing policies for literacy teaching in primary schools, UK policy makers draw on research that views literacy as a singular entity consisting of a set of 'basic skills' that can be applied to any situation where reading and writing is required. Within these dominant discourses, schooling supports young children by guiding them through a universal process of the acquisition of these skills, moving them from ignorance to competence as they progress through schooled institutions. From this perspective it is reasonable to assume that there will be a model of 'best' pedagogical practice that will secure every child's progression along this universal path to literacy.

This perspective can be exemplified by the 2006 'Independent Review of the Teaching of Early Reading' (hereafter the Rose Review 2006), an influential document, commissioned by the then UK government to identify 'what best practice should be expected in the teaching of early reading and phonics…' (Rose 2006 p.7). This report's recommendations informed changes to the literacy curriculum proposed for English primary schools. The sources of information cited in the report were:

> '…the findings of research and inspection; wide ranging consultation, including practitioners, teachers and trainers, resource providers and policy makers, and visits to settings, schools and training events.'
>
> [Rose 2006 p.2]

The research cited in the review is almost exclusively from the field of cognitive psychology and the institutions and personnel mentioned are all connected to schools and classrooms. I shall discuss each of these in turn here.

In terms of cognitive psychology Purcell-Gates, Jacobson and Degener (2004) provide a useful summary of the priorities of this research to find a universal path to literacy acquisition for all children:

> 'Reading researchers who work within a cognitive perspective believe that print literacy acquisition follows specific developmental milestones. Cognitive researchers tend to be interested in what they would consider to be normative behaviour, as in the learning-to-read process, and they single out non-normative cases in order to better understand and to explicate the norm. Thus, although social context is not always ignored, it is generally understood that reading and learning to how to read involve the same processes for everyone.'
>
> [Purcell-Gates, Jacobson and Degener 2004 p.43]

Whilst this account is based on research and policy in the US, similar trajectories can be identified in the UK. For example, Sealy (2000) discusses her analysis of British texts from the psycholinguistic field related to language acquisition in children. She notes the division of language into elements that are acquired in a particular order:

> 'A pattern common to many discussions of initial acquisition is – quite understandably – the division of both language and children into gradations: language in terms of its elements and children in terms of their ages.'
>
> [Sealy 2000 p.81]

This notion of a universal linear progression of literacy acquisition through various elements of language – often referred to as 'basic skills' - such as handwriting, grammar and spelling - is dominant in research into young children and literacy that informs government policy. This perspective also informs the organisation of UK schooling whereby children are organised into year groups and progress through schools in same age cohorts. Regular assessments of each child's progress are made

according to whether they have reached the expected milestones of literacy development deemed appropriate for their year of schooling.

The outcomes of such assessments are gathered as statistical data by the UK Department for Education[2]. This large-scale data informs the search for a 'best practice' model of teaching that policy-makers envisage will secure high 'standards' of literacy acquisition in UK schools. Using these statistics, gathered on the progress of every child in the UK state schooling system, policy makers identify schools where children are judged to be achieving well against milestones of literacy acquisition. They then examine the practices of these schools in order to identify teaching and organisational strategies that support children in reaching milestones of literacy acquisition at the rate expected for their chronological age. Policy research focuses on locating and disseminating this practice to other schools. For example, in the introduction to a report on the teaching of reading (OFSTED 2010[3]), the then Chief Inspector of UK state schools stated that:

> 'This report draws from the practice of 12 outstanding schools in different parts of England to illuminate what works in teaching children to read…
>
> …The challenge is for all schools to emulate practices which are eminently transferrable and which should be applied consistently and reliably everywhere.'
>
> [OFSTED 2010 p.3]

This approach can also be seen in reports such as 'Yes He Can: Schools where boys write well' (OFSTED 2003), 'Independent Review of the Teaching of Early Reading' (Rose 2006, above) and 'Reading by Six: How the best schools do it' (OFSTED 2010, above).

[2] The government agency responsible for primary education in England has undergone many name changes over the last thirty years. A list of the names it has had that are relevant to this study occurs in the Abbreviations table at the beginning of the thesis.

[3] Office for Standards in Education – the UK government agency responsible for inspecting schools.

Thus the research that UK policy makers prioritise when formulating policies for literacy education draw on what I have termed 'dominant' discourses of literacy and literacy acquisition. Within these discourses, children acquire literacy as a set of basic, transferrable and measurable skills by following a universal path via specific milestones of achievement towards a point where they are judged to be literate.

However, policy makers' own evaluations of successive government's educational reforms that are based on such research (cf House of Commons 2005; Gove, political speech, 2010) demonstrate that repeated reforms of literacy curricula, inspection practices and assessment methods fail to adequately address a perceived ongoing issue of literacy underachievement in a certain proportion of the population (usually taken to be around 20% or 1 in 5). This 20% proportion of children who do not achieve the expected levels in literacy is often referred to as the 'long tail of underachievement' (Smithers 2013 p.2, 29 – 30; OFSTED 2013 p.4; Morgan political speech 2015). Finding the best way of tackling this 'long tail' is a preoccupation of both the British government and the British media.

I argue that the persistence of concerns regarding this issue in UK schooling demonstrates a need to open up new avenues of inquiry into the relationship between children, schools and literacy. This thesis does not aim to provide answers to the perceived ongoing literacy crisis in England's schools, but to draw on theoretical frameworks that challenge dominant discourses in order to explore the complex relationship between literacy, schools and young children. Each of these frameworks – a perception of Literacy as a Social Practice (LSP); a Foucauldian analysis of schools as 'disciplinary' institutions (Foucault 1977); and Corsaro's account of young children's engagement with the social world (Corsaro 2005, 2011) – provide conceptual tools that support wider perspectives on what young children do when they engage with literacy tasks in the context of classrooms.

In the remainder of this chapter I shall present each of these theoretical perspectives, beginning with social literacies' theorists account of literacy, followed by a view of schooling drawn from Michel Foucault's theorisation of disciplinary technologies in the institutions of modern states and finishing with an account of William Corsaro's concept of 'interpretive reproduction' as a way of understanding young children in the social world.

1.2 Literacy as a Social Practice (LSP)

In my research into young children's encounter with schooled literacy, the literacies found in schooling are understood to be social practices (cf Street 1984). Researchers adopting this perspective describe the dominant discourses of literacy described above as the 'autonomous' view of literacy (Street 1984). To challenge this model theorists in what Street has termed 'Literacy as a Social Practice or 'LSP' (2015) present a model of Literacy as a Social Practice. Instead of asking what 'basic skills' of literacy people have, they ask what people do when literacy is needed in their everyday lives. This notion of Literacy as a Social Practice offers a useful way of understanding what children do when they practise literacy in their everyday classroom lives.

Street (1984 p.8) suggests six characteristics of LSP:

> '1. …the meaning of literacy depends upon the social institutions in which it is embedded;
>
> 2. …literacy can only be known to us in forms which already have political and ideological significance and it cannot…be helpfully separated from that significance and treated as though it were an 'autonomous' thing;
>
> 3. …the particular practices of reading and writing that are taught in any context depend on such aspects of social structure as stratification…and the role of educational institutions;

4. …the processes whereby reading and writing are learnt are what construct the meaning of it for particular practitioners;

5. …we would probably more appropriately refer to 'literacies' than to any single 'literacy';

6. …writers who tend towards this model and away from the 'autonomous' model recognise as problematic the relationship between the analysis of any 'autonomous' isolable qualities of literacy and the analysis of the ideological and political nature of literacy practice.'

[Street 1984 p.8]

Thus, the social model outlined by Street presents literacy as context embedded, used to achieve social goals, and imbued with the policies and ideologies of the institutions and settings within which it occurs. This challenge to the dominant 'autonomous' model of literacy opens up new avenues of exploration for researchers studying children, literacy and schooling in that it supports an exploration of literacy in the context of the complex social world of the classroom.

1.2.1 Features of an LSP approach which support classroom research

Here I offer an account of six features of an LSP approach to literacy research, which have been helpful in my study. These are: i) the concept of a literacy practice to support an exploration of what people do with literacy; ii) a consideration of the meanings people have for literacy in their everyday lives; iii) a notion of 'literacies' in the plural rather than 'literacy' in the singular; iv) support for the study of relationships between different discourses of literacy that occupy the same social space; v) a perspective on what people do with literacy; and vi) an emphasis on the importance of studying literacy practices in the social contexts in which they are deployed. I offer an overview of each of these here.

Firstly, LSP offers the concept of a 'literacy practice' to support the exploration of what people do with literacy. As Barton, Hamilton and Ivanic (2000) explain:

> '…practices are not observable units of behaviour since they also involve values, attitudes, feelings and social relationships. This includes people's awareness of literacy, constructions of literacy and discourses of literacy, how people talk about and make sense of literacy.'
>
> [Barton, Hamilton and Ivanic 2000 p.7]

A key feature of literacy practices is that they are contingent on people's interpretation of their immediate social context and their priorities for, and perceptions of, what would constitute successful participation in that context. Thus, the observable deployment of 'basic skills' is only part of the literacy practices young children reproduce in the classroom; they are also comprised of values, beliefs and attitudes about literacy and the social context in which it is deployed.

Secondly, understanding literacy in this way suggests that the meanings young children take on for literacy as they acquire 'basic skills' in schooling form part of their understanding of literacy in their wider social lives. This consideration of the interpretive aspect of literacy practices is particularly important in studying young children's literacy acquisition in schools because, as Street (1984 above) asserts, the meanings practitioners have for literacy are linked to 'the processes whereby reading and writing are learnt' (Street ibid). Therefore, exploring what the processes of being taught literacy in school means to young children is an important avenue of inquiry.

Thirdly, the notion of 'literacies' in the plural, rather than 'literacy' in the singular allows the literacy dominant in schooling to be seen as a particular variety of literacy which is specific to that particular institutional setting. Street and Street (1995) comment that people come to conceptualise literacy 'against their own experience' according to the dominant discourses of literacy outlined above (1995 p.114). This indicates the presence of power in schooled literacy practices as the discourse of literacy described as the 'autonomous' model comes to assume dominance over others. In this thesis I

draw on the work of LSP researchers such as Street and Street (1995); Barton, Hamilton and Ivanic (2000); Gregory and Williams (2000); Barton (2007); and Papen (2016) in refering to this literacy as 'schooled literacy'. Understanding that this dominant literacy is closely connected to the social settings in which it is deployed means it can be explored in terms of how it is constituted and practised within that setting, as I will do in this thesis.

Additionally, an LSP perspective supports the study of the relationships between different discourses of literacy in the same social space. The contingency of interpretation in the concept of a literacy practice suggests that different literacy practitioners working within the same context may understand what they are doing in different ways. This is an important idea when studying children's practices of literacy in schools since, whilst a schooled literacy discourse assumes dominance over others in the social context of the classroom, alternative discourses and practices may occupy the same social space but are assigned less value (Bourne 2001, 2002; Maybin 2007).

As well as this, taking an LSP perspective on literacy positions young children as practising literacy - that is 'doing' something with literacy in the social context of the classroom. From this perspective research can focus on what young children *do* with literacy in the classroom rather than being solely concerned with their position in relation to developmental milestones of skills acquisition.

It is important to note at this point that an LSP approach does not suggest that cognitive processes and technical, or in this thesis 'basic', skills are not an important part of literacy practices. Barton (2007) suggests that '…one approach may be to see skills as situated within practices…' (Barton 2007 p.163). To clarify this I draw further on the work of Purcell-Gates, Jacobson and Degener (2004) to accept their view that a:

> '…way of envisioning the relationship between the sociocultural and the cognitive… [frames for understanding literacy]… is as relating transactionally in a nested relationship, with the cognitive occurring within the sociocultural context.'
>
> [Purcell-Gates, Jacobson and Degener 2004 p.81]

Thus cognitive processes and technical skills are assumed to be a part of the literacy practices described in this thesis. In presenting my data, I suspend rather than deny the importance of the cognitive approaches to reading and writing in order to focus on how reading and writing are related to the institution of schooling and the children's social lives within it.

Finally, the LSP emphasis on the relationship between literacy practices and the social context demands that such practices are studied in the social contexts in which they are deployed. To this end, an LSP approach to research emphasises the use of ethnographic methods which enable the study of everyday phenomena in the contexts in which they occur. Thus in order to understand the literacy practices of young children in schools it is essential to observe these practices in the everyday social world of the classroom. This is therefore the research principle that I have adopted in addressing my research question. I shall discuss this further in Chapter 2 of this thesis.

To summarise, a social literacies approach to the study of young children's engagement with schooled literacy tasks allows researchers to challenge dominant discourses of literacy, schooling and young children by formulating schooled literacy as a particular type of literacy which has its own specific features. Young children engaged in schooled literacy tasks are practising literacy within a social context in which this discourse of literacy is dominant. Whilst the acquisition of particular literacy 'skills' is part of these practices, they are also imbued with values, beliefs and attitudes that children hold about literacy and schooling. For these reasons, I believe that an LSP perspective on literacy supports an exploration of the complexity of children's

encounter with the processes of being taught literacy in the social world of the classroom.

1.2.2 LSP and the literacies of schooling

Above (1.2.1), I explained that an LSP perspective supports the study of the relationships between different practices of literacy in the same social space. In this thesis I am particularly concerned with two sets of literacy practices – that found within the dominant discourse of what I have termed 'schooled literacy' and that found within the peer cultures of the young children who encounter this literacy in the classroom. I now turn to consider each of these sets of practices from the perspective of LSP.

1.2.2.1 LSP and schooled literacy

LSP researchers have identified a number of key features of what I refer to as 'schooled literacy' (cf Street and Street (1995); Barton, Hamilton and Ivanic (2000); Gregory and Williams (2000); Barton (2007); and Papen (2016)) a set of discourses and practices that are closely associated with the LSP definition of the 'autonomous' view of literacy (Street 1984). These are that i) schooled literacy is dominant over other forms of literacy; ii) within schooled literacy individuals can be judged according to their literacy competence; iii) schooled literacy is tightly entwined with the organisational procedures and practices of schooling. I shall discuss each of these in turn here.

From an LSP perspective, the first feature of schooled literacy is its dominance over other views of literacy, even beyond the school. Barton (2007) explains that:

> 'Schools are the places associated with the teaching and learning of literacy in our society; it is very hard to free ourselves from their perspective, and to take a look at literacy from a perspective other than the educational one.'
>
> [Barton 2007 p.175]

The dominance of schooled perspectives on literacy in wider society has been termed 'the pedagogisation of literacy' (Street and Street 1991) a term that describes how the

values, attitudes and beliefs of schooled literacy form a powerful discourse that has come to affect how people understand literacy in their everyday lives.

Another feature of schooled literacy identified by writers taking an LSP perspective is that it is used as a basis for judging individuals by assigning them to different levels of competence. Thus, as Gregory et al (2004)[4] explain, schooled or 'classroom' literacy:

> '…is not the same as others, since its power in determining children's future school success sets it on a very different level.'
>
> [Gregory et al 2004 p.88]

Schooled literacy is therefore seen as having the attribute of forming the basis of judgements of individual children's competencies to the extent that it affects how successful or otherwise they can be in their school careers.

Finally, writers studying literacy and schooling from an LSP perspective argue that schooled literacy is entwined with institutional structures and this gives it distinctive qualities. For example Moss (2001) argues that:

> 'Schools exert a particular effect through the institutional context in which the social organisation and transmission of knowledge takes place. Through the pedagogic practices entrenched at every level of the institution, schools transform what they come into contact with.'
>
> [Moss 2001 p.155]

Moss' argument means that the literacy found in school cannot be supposed to be 'autonomous' of its schooled context; it will be affected by the institutional practices of schooling. This point is also made by writers in the US, for example Bloome et al[5] (2005) discuss how schools' pedagogic practices frame the literacy practices found in

[4] Gregory, Williams, Baker and Street (2004)
[5] Bloome, D., Carter, S., Christian, B., Otto, S., & Shuart-Faris, N. (2005).

schooling. In their work they characterise literacy events as 'author/audience' and explain a special feature of such events in schooling:

> '…an author-audience event (the writing of a letter, the telling of a story, the reading of a novel) is constructed within and through the immediate, face to face pedagogic event.'
>
> [Bloome et al 2005 p.107]

From an LSP perspective then, a distinctive feature of the literacy that is practised in schools is that it takes place within a pedagogic framework that has the potential to affect the values, beliefs and attitudes of the literacy that is practised there. When children encounter literacy in schooling they are therefore also encountering a set of pedagogic discourses and practices which form a distinctive part of that literacy.

Authors studying practices of literacy within schools add further detail to the values, beliefs and attitudes of schooled literacy. For example, they note that: i) it normalises particular cultural practices as being ideal and advantageous to children's literacy acquisition (cf Heath 1994; Gregory and Williams 2000); ii) it is associated with the literacy of particular social classes or groups, privileging the children of families whose home practices of literacy align with those of schooling (Heath 1994); iii) schooled literacy is described as print-centric despite the advent of new technologies and research into the multi-modal nature of texts (Larson 2006; Millard 2006; Wohlwend 2009; Wolfe and Flewitt 2010; McTavish 2014); and iv) it emphasises individual rather than collective engagement with the reading and production of texts (Heath 1983; Wohlwend 2009, Dyson 2010).

In summary, an LSP perspective on studying children practising literacy in schools supports an understanding of the literacy found in schooling as a distinct phenomenon embedded in institutions of state that normalises some practises of literacy whilst

marginalising others. Researchers taking an LSP perspective into studying literacy and schooling offer insights into particular features of schooled literacy (cf Moss 2001; Gregory, Williams, Baker and Street 2004) that add to the perspectives of dominant discourses. Of particular value for this thesis is the explication of the link between schooled literacy and the procedures and practises of the institution of schooling (cf Moss 2001; Bloome et al 2005).

I note here that, in order to sharpen my perspective on the procedures and practices of schooled institutions, I have drawn on Foucault's theorisation of schools as 'disciplinary institutions' (Foucault 1977). This theorisation has been helpful in showing how the dominant discourses described above are enacted in the everyday schooled literacy practices that young children encounter in the classroom. I shall offer a full description of my use of Foucault's work later in the chapter (1.3, below), but first I turn to an account of how an LSP perspective is applied to studies of young children's literacy practices. I begin by describing a view of children's literacy acquisition, drawn from the work of authors adopting an LSP perspective, which challenges assumptions of a universal path to literacy. I then show how this challenge opens up possibilities for researchers taking such a view to explore a diversity of literacies in UK primary classrooms.

1.2.2.2 LSP as a challenge to dominant assumptions about a universal path to literacy

UK researchers taking an LSP perspective to studying young children's literacy acquisition draw on the work of Shirley Brice Heath, a US ethnographer whose research challenges notions of a universal, linear path to literacy. Heath's most influential work, 'Ways with Words' (1983) was an US ethnographic study conducting research into the language practices of different communities in the Piedmont Carolinas in the US. Heath identified multiple norms of language and literacy development in children arising from different community practices of literacy (for a summary of this see Heath 1994). Heath's work inspired a movement in UK literacy

research that used ethnography to identify the diversity of literacies and literacy practices in families and communities outside of schooling in the UK. Such studies show children actively engaged in their own development, synthesising their various experiences of literacy to form practices that enable them to utilise literacy in their lives (cf Gregory 1996, 1997; Gregory and Williams 2000; studies in Gregory, Long and Volk 2004). These authors argue that there can be no single path to literacy when literacy is such a diverse social practice.

Understanding literacy acquisition to be a diverse, socially situated process suggests that young children in classrooms will have different approaches to practising literacy in the social context of schooling (cf Gregory 1996; Christ and Wang 2008). I note however that researchers taking this perspective on children and literacy also argue that an LSP perspective can miss '…the remarkable cognitive, cultural and linguistic flexibility of young children…' (Gregory, Long and Volk 2004 p.2). To account for this '…cognitive, cultural and linguistic flexibility…' (ibid) in my research I have found it useful to draw on the work of William Corsaro – in particular his conceptualisation of children's socialisation as 'interpretive reproduction (Corsaro 2011) and I shall discuss this further later in the chapter (1.4). For the moment I describe how acknowledging the diversity of pathways to literacy opens up possibilities for exploring the relationship between different values, attitudes and beliefs about literacy in the social space of the primary classroom.

1.2.2.3 The diversity of literacy practices in UK primary classrooms

The acknowledgement of a diversity of pathways to literacy supports the view that in the context of schooling, whilst a schooled literacy discourse of literacy assumes dominance over others, alternative discourses and practices may occupy the same social space but are assigned less value. Researchers applying LSP perspectives to older children in classrooms have generated valuable insights into children's practices

of literacy in schools, in particular the alternative discourses and practices available to children in classrooms.

For example in her research into the practices of 10-11 year old children in British primary schools, Maybin (2007) argues that 'schooled' or 'autonomous' literacy is not necessarily children's only experience of literacy in the classroom. The children in her study engaged in other interactions aside from those with the teacher and in doing so drew on other literacies. She suggests that privileging students' and children's perspectives over those of the adults and teachers, as she did in her research, can open up new ways of understanding what happens in schooled institutions.

Bourne's research on the classroom activities of 8 – 9 year old bilingual pupils engaged in schooled literacy lessons in East London (Bourne 2001; 2002) also privileged the children's perspectives. It revealed children's stable and shared practices of literacy operating within primary classrooms. These practices drew on alternative discourses of literacy to that dominant in schooling. Bourne showed that children in the classroom may draw on different priorities for their classroom work, in particular '…developing their peer relationships and attempting to understand their lives and the world around them' (Bourne 2002 p.244). Nevertheless the children were still constrained by the institutional and discursive practices of schooling, through which their '…own discourses can be read, assessed and judged…' (Bourne 2002 p.243). Bourne's work demonstrates that children may have alternative priorities for classroom social practices that are more strongly related to their social worlds than their engagement with schooled literacy tasks. However, the institutional setting of schooling means that such social practices will always be constrained by the dominant schooled literacy practices and procedures.

Bourne and Maybin's work offers new insights into the relationships between the social context of schooling and the children's practices of literacy that are found there. Firstly

it suggests that, from the perspective of the children, the literacy classroom is a complex social world where co-existing discourses of literacy and priorities for social action must be managed within the constraints of schooled discourses and practices. Secondly, Bourne and Maybin's work suggests that it is important to consider how children engage with this complex social world. I note here that in exploring my data on young children's literacy practices I have found it helpful to draw on Corsaro's theory of 'interpretive reproduction' to more fully account for young children's engagement with the competing discourses and social priorities of schooled literacy lessons. I shall return to a fuller account of this theorisation in the last part of this chapter (1.4, below).

To summarise: an LSP perspective on Literacy as a Social Practice embedded in social contexts allows for greater complexity to be accounted for in inquiries into young children's practices of literacy in the classroom. Firstly, the concept of a literacy practice supports an investigation into the values, attitudes and beliefs children hold for their participation in schooled literacy tasks. Secondly, the identification of schooled literacy as a distinct phenomenon supports the development of avenues of enquiry that explore the relationship between children's literacy practices in classroom and this schooled literacy. Thirdly, an acknowledgement of diversity in discourses and practices of literacy, even in the same social space, allows for a fuller picture of what happens in the social world of classrooms where literacy is taught. Applying this perspective therefore allows the generation of insights and questions related to the messy complexity of children's literacy practices in schooled settings.

However I have also noted that additional theoretical perspectives are required in order to have a sharper focus firstly on the relationship between the institution of schooling and the literacy that is found there; and secondly the creative, adaptive agency of young children producing literacy practices within that institution. In this thesis this has entailed my drawing on the work of Michel Foucault on modern institutions of state (cf Foucault 1977) and William Corsaro on children's socialisation as 'interpretive

reproduction' (cf Corsaro 2005; 2011). I now offer an account of each of these theoretical perspectives and their application to my research, beginning with the work of Michel Foucault.

1.3 A Foucauldian perspective on literacy in schooling

I have discussed how LSP researchers describe the distinctive features and qualities that distinguish the literacy found in institutions of schooling from literacies found in wider society. For the purposes of my research, I have found it helpful to draw on Michel Foucault's analysis of schooling as a 'disciplinary institution' (Foucault 1977) to sharpen my perspective on the relationship between the dominant literacy of UK primary classrooms described by LSP researchers, termed in this thesis 'schooled literacy,' and the everyday organisational procedures and practices of schooling.

The tools and concepts found in Foucault's work offer a wider perspective to the mainstream 'best practice' research into children's acquisition of literacy in schools that I described at the beginning of this chapter. I remind the reader that such research views the task for education policy as being to isolate 'best practice' for schools supporting children in their acquisition of 'basic skills' of literacy in order to secure adequate 'standards' of literacy for the population as a whole. Foucault's work enables the systems and procedures that organise schooled literacy practices – whether 'best' or otherwise - to be made explicit in ways that enable researchers to explore their effects on the literacy practices of both schooled literacy and the young children who encounter it in the classroom.

Dixon (2011) explains how the tools and concepts provided by Foucault supported her exploration of the literacy practices of South African elementary schools (age 4 – 7). She found that the application of Foucault to her analysis of schooled literacy practices:

> '…opens space for analysing how particular enactments of literacy become embodied in particular spaces but not in others and why this may happen.'
>
> [Dixon 2011 p.168]

Dixon's approach shows how, whilst a social literacies approach can describe the discourses and assumptions of schooled literacy implicit in a 'best practice' approach to educational research, additional concepts and tools from the work of Michel Foucault support explorations of how these discourses and assumptions are enacted in the everyday practices and procedures of UK classrooms and their potential effects on the literacy practices of young children. Here, I offer an overview of the tools and concepts I have used in my research.

1.3.1 Schooled literacy as situated in an institution of the modern nation state

Since the 1880s, when attendance at school became compulsory, most people in the UK and other western nations have encountered literacy within institutions of mass schooling. Ball (2008) describes how such institutions arose in England in the 18th and 19th centuries as a response to a perceived need to control disordered populations. The aim was to maintain the British class system by managing the urban working class and to accommodate the social and political aspirations of the emerging middle class (Ball 2008 p.56 see also Johnson 1970). In the work of Michel Foucault schools, along with hospitals and prisons, are characterised as 'disciplinary' institutions. Such institutions are crucial to the maintenance of modern states as they enable diverse populations to be regulated and controlled through the maintenance of relationships of power. This maintenance of power relationships is achieved through the deployment of 'technologies' that are ideologically neutral in themselves, but can be deployed by individuals or groups in order to act upon other individuals or groups. The application of such technologies make certain possibilities for human behaviour appear 'normal' or 'common sense' whilst others become 'abnormal' or 'undesirable'. In terms of the dominant discourses of schooled literacy described at the beginning of this chapter, the application of disciplinary technologies secures the action of these discourses on the

literacy practices of children in schools. In bringing these discourses to bear on the literacy practices of young children in classrooms, they open up some possibilities for what it means to practise literacy whilst denying others.

I remind the reader that from the perspective of schooled literacy children acquire literacy as a set of basic, transferrable and measurable skills by following a universal path via specific milestones of achievement towards a point where they are judged to be literate. A Foucauldian perspective on this discourse of schooled literacy can demonstrate how it informs the operation of what Foucault would call the 'disciplinary technologies' of: i) *surveillance*; ii) *normalising judgement*; and iii) the *examination,* which are used to classify and distribute diverse populations of children within the institution of schooling. Here I give a brief overview of these technologies together with examples of how they draw on the notion of universal staged linear path towards literacy in order to regulate school populations. This is only intended as an exemplifying introduction to the relevance of Foucault's work to my thesis. A thorough exploration of the use of disciplinary technologies to organise literacy curricula can be found in Chapter 3 with reference to examples from my ethnographic data.

1.3.1.1 Surveillance

Surveillance, often described as 'observation' in UK primary schools, is the means by which knowledge is generated about individuals. The spaces of disciplinary institutions are designed to make individuals as visible as possible, liable to be observed at all times. This visibility allows the subject to be described, enabling knowledge to be generated about them. In Discipline and Punish (Foucault 1977), Foucault described how *surveillance* became integral to the foundation of systems of mass schooling in modern nation states:

> ‘A relation of surveillance, defined and regulated, is inscribed at the heart of the practice of teaching, not as an additional or an adjacent part, but as a mechanism that is inherent to it and which increases its efficiency.’
>
> [Foucault 1977 p.176]

In terms of literacy in schools, the operation of the disciplinary technology of surveillance ensures that, within UK primary classrooms, there are limited opportunities for young children to practice literacy unsupervised. For example, classrooms are arranged so the teacher can see all of the children at any time; early readers are required to read out loud, often in the hearing of an adult; and writing is carried out in special books that are always available to adult scrutiny. This ongoing surveillance means children’s in-school literacy practices are constantly scrutinised to ensure they come within the range of what is considered ‘normal’ (see 1.3.1.2, below) within the dominant discourses of literacy drawn on by education policy makers. In this way surveillance has the potential to constrain the literacy practices young children reproduce in schooled contexts.

1.3.1.2 Normalising judgment

Foucault described how the knowledge generated by surveillance is used to compare individuals to each other by measuring them against what is considered ‘normal’. Foucault described this as *normalising judgement* which amongst other actions:

> ‘…measures in quantitative terms and hierarchizes in terms of value the abilities, the level, the ‘nature’ of individuals. It introduces, through this ‘value-giving’ measure, the constraint of a conformity that must be achieved.’
>
> [Foucault 1977 p.183]

In schooled literacy the ‘constraint[s] of a conformity that must be achieved’ (Foucault, ibid) are the normalised qualities of a literate subject drawn from dominant discourses of young children, literacy and schooling discussed at the beginning of this chapter. I remind the reader that, in UK schooling, hierarchized stages of literacy acquisition

identified in mainstream educational research are reified into levels of attainment describing the aspects of literacy children are expected to acquire by each stage of their school career. The creation of such levels of attainment enables the information gathered through ongoing surveillance of children to be used to judge those children against notions of what is considered 'normal' in terms of their progression in acquiring literacy skills. Such judgements normalise particular qualities of the literate subject, in this case by the 'basic skills' they are able to display in engaging with print literacy by a certain age. Whilst some qualities are normalised others are marginalised, such as the alternative pathways to literacy acquisition described in the work of LSP researchers (cf Heath 1994; Gregory and Williams 2000; Millard 2006).

1.3.1.3 The examination

The examination is the combination of '…the techniques of an observing hierarchy… [i.e. surveillance]…, and those of a normalising judgement…' (Foucault 1977 p.184). Foucault suggests that in the modern state project:

> '…the school became a sort of apparatus of uninterrupted examination that duplicated along its entire length the apparatus of teaching. It became … increasingly a perpetual comparison of each and all that made it possible both to measure and to judge.'
>
> [Foucault 1977 p.186]

In terms of schooled literacy this 'uninterrupted examination' (Foucault 1977 ibid) is found in everyday practices. Examples of examinations – described as 'assessment' within UK primary schools - include the marking of children's writing in books; the administration of tests, the marking of written work and the act of listening to children read. This ongoing process of examination creates each child as a 'case' in relation to the normalised view of literacy acquisition described above, describing the parameters of the literate subject they are able to be in relation to dominant discourses of schooled literacy.

In schools, disciplinary technologies such as *surveillance*, *normalising judgement* and the *examination* bring the dominant discourses of literacy described at the beginning of this chapter to act directly on the literacy practices of young children. In doing so they produce and maintain schooled literacy, the distinctive set of discourses and literacy practices that young children encounter in UK primary schools. An effect of this within the school is to naturalise a particular view of literacy and position the children in particular places within the institution in relation to this view. For example, a child judged as 'below average' in their progress along the universal path towards literacy identified in mainstream research may be grouped with other children judged to be in the same category. This group of children can then be offered a particular literacy curriculum that differs from that offered to children judged to be in other categories. They may be offered particular literacy tasks, or be seated in a particular teaching space in the school. In this way schooled literacy is brought to bear directly on the possibilities available to the children for practising literacy within the institution of schooling, ensuring they do so within the constraints of schooled discourses and practices (cf Bourne 2002; Maybin 2007; above).

In my research, understanding how disciplinary technologies are intended to act upon children in the classroom sharpens my understanding of what young children encounter when they encounter schooled literacy. My data shows that these disciplinary technologies are visible to the children I studied and are accounted for by those children in their literacy practices. This will form part of my analysis of the children's literacy practices presented in Chapters 4 -7. For the moment I note that, as Dixon (2011) suggests in her study of discipline in South African elementary schools' teaching of literacy, these technologies are not always accounted for when researchers and educators consider literacy in schools:

> ‘Because many of these techniques…[disciplinary technologies]… are invisible, and experienced teachers use them intuitively, we do not always see them. Making them explicit is a way of directing attention to how they work and the ensuing consequences.’
>
> [Dixon 2011 p.165]

Foucault’s conceptualisation of disciplinary technologies in the regulation of diverse populations in institutions of state can therefore support the exploration of questions relating to the relationship between literacy and schooling by making explicit the technologies that maintain particular discourses of literacy and enable those discourses to act on human subjects. These technologies are so embedded in schools that they are often overlooked in research into the teaching and learning of literacy in schooled contexts. Drawing them out and considering their effect on the literacy that children encounter in schooling can add additional insights into and questions about the relationship between children, schooling and literacy.

1.3.2 Disciplining young children into literate subjects

The application of Foucault’s theorisation to literacy in schooling can be exemplified with reference to academic studies concerned with the work of discipline in producing particular literate subjects (cf Luke 1992, Manyak 2004). Dixon (2011) offers a substantial study of discipline in time and space in South African early literacy classrooms. Drawing on ‘Discipline and Punish’ (Foucault 1977), she notes how discipline acts directly on the bodies of children when they are taught early literacy. Through exhaustive practice the children are taught how to sit, hold implements for writing, and manage all the equipment they need in the space allotted to them (Dixon 2011 p.56 – 57). Dixon draws on the work of Pierre Bourdieu to argue that such exhaustive practice produces a particular literate ‘habitus’ or way of being. Woods and Henderson (2002) examine ‘Reading Recovery’, a programme used to support struggling readers in Australia and the UK. They describe how a ‘Reading Recovery’ teacher exercises disciplinary technologies to normalise particular processes of reading

and assign her student to a particular subjectivity in relation to them. Studies such as those described above show how the application of Foucault's theorisation of disciplinary technologies can give a more precise account of how children are established and maintained as particular literate subjects in everyday practices of literacy within schooling.

To summarise, Foucault's theorisation of schools as disciplinary institutions and in particular his description of disciplinary technologies, support an analysis of how the dominant discourses of schooled literacy identified by LSP researchers are maintained in systems of mass schooling. These technologies are intended to bring dominant discourses to act directly upon the literacy practices of young children in classrooms, normalising some literacy practices whilst marginalising others. The application of Foucault's theorisation makes these technologies explicit and enables the relationship between literacy and the institution of schooling to be explored.

However Foucault's conceptualisation of such technologies, being based on accounts of practices from documentation rather than observations of practices in day-to-day life, does not fully support a detailed understanding of young children's actions in response to the effects of these technologies. A Literacy as a Social Practice (LSP) perspective insists on the use of ethnographic approaches to studying people's practices of literacy in the contexts in which they occur (1.2.1, above). Such approaches support a more in depth analysis of what young children do when they encounter these disciplinary technologies in classrooms. However, I remind the reader that an LSP approach has been critiqued for not paying sufficient attention to the '…cognitive, cultural and linguistic flexibility of young children…' (Gregory, Long and Volk 2004 p.2). In order to secure sufficient focus in this area on my study of the literacy practices of young children in schooling, I have drawn on William Corsaro's theorisation of young children's participation in the social world as 'interpretive reproduction' (Corsaro 2005,

2011) which offers a helpful way of understanding young children's reproduction of literacy practices in the social context of the primary school classroom.

1.4 Young children engaging with schooled literacy

Corsaro's theory of 'interpretive reproduction' (Corsaro 2005, 2011) offers a theoretically valid view of children and childhood which challenges dominant discourses of young children's literacy acquisition. Within these dominant discourses literacy acquisition is understood as a universal progression along a staged linear path of 'basic skills' development. Corsaro's work enables this view to be challenged by allowing children to be seen as reproducing literacy practices as cultural routines, often within their peer culture, in response to their interpretations of the social world. Thus children do not simply adopt the literacy practices taught by the adults around them, as assumed in the dominant discourses of schooled literacy, but reproduce their own literacy practices that are tailored to their personal interests and priorities. This perspective on children aligns with the theorisation of Literacy as a Social Practice described above (1.2). Such practices are contingent upon the children's interpretations of what is expected of them when they practice literacy in the classroom and so remain constrained by the disciplinary technologies (Foucault 1977) that produce and maintain schooled literacy in everyday classroom contexts. Here I offer a fuller description of Corsaro's theorisation of 'interpretive reproduction, together with an account of how I have applied it in my research.

Corsaro summarises his theory thus:

> 'The term interpretive captures innovative and creative aspects of children's participation in society. Children produce and participate in their own unique peer cultures by creatively appropriating information from the adult world to address their own peer concerns. The term reproductive captures the idea that children are not simply internalising society and culture, but are also actively contributing to cultural production and change. The term also implies that children are, by their very

> participation in society, constrained by the existing social structure and by social reproduction.'
>
> [Corsaro 2000 p.92]

This conceptualisation of children's socialisation in the wider social world is helpful for my research into the relationship between young children, literacy and schooling in that it offers a way of understanding young children's literacy practices as cultural routines that are interpretively reproduced (Corsaro 2005, 2011). Cultural routines are defined by Corsaro and Molinari (2000) as:

> Collectively produced activities…[that are] recurrent and predictable. The repeated production of …routines is important because it provides children and all other social actors with the security and shared understanding of belonging to a social group…On the other hand, the predictability of routines provides numerous possibilities for creative embellishment in which social actors can interpret, produce, display and extend a wide range of cultural knowledge.'
>
> [Corsaro and Molinari 2000 p.18 -19]

In this thesis I understand literacy practices to be examples of such cultural routines, invested with values, attitudes and beliefs that are often shared within the children's social group and involve 'creative embellishment' (Corsaro and Molinari ibid) rather than the straightforward reproduction of adult practices. As suggested by both interpretive reproduction and the LSP concept of a literacy practice, such routines or practices are contingent upon young children's interpretations of the priorities of their current social context, thus supporting an exploration of the relationship between young children, schooling and literacy that allows for their interpretations of the process of being taught to read and write in school.

However, I note that I have found it useful to apply the concept of interpretive reproduction not only to young children's collective activities, as it is used in Corsaro's work (Corsaro and Molinari 2000, above), but also to their individual practices of literacy as they engage with texts in the schooled context. In such instances however,

this thesis still understands children's individual engagement with texts as being firmly situated in the social world and likely to involve the reproduction of literacy practices which reflect values, attitudes and beliefs about schooled literacy that are shared within Amber Class' children's classroom peer culture and/or the children's wider social worlds. In the following section of this chapter I expand further on the application of Corsaro's theorisation of interpretive reproduction in my work.

1.4.1 Corsaro's theory of interpretive reproduction in my research

Corsaro (2005, 2011) offers a theorisation of young children's development as a social process whereby children, through interaction with each other and adults in the social world, appropriate information and creatively use it to reproduce peer cultures in which they develop routines which enable them to manage their current concerns and priorities. Here I give an account of how I have drawn on this theorisation to inform my thinking about my observations of Amber Class children's in-class literacy practices.

1.4.1.1 A diversity of developmental pathways

Interpretive reproduction is linked to the notion of children as developing. Thus it reminds us that, whilst children are active and creative in their interpretive reproduction of literacy practices, there are still features of literacy and schooling that they have not yet encountered or do not fully understand. Since literacy practices are contingent on current interpretations of the social world, the children's practices are subject to refinement and development as their access to, and understanding of, features of the social world changes. This process is described by Corsaro and Eder thus:

> ‘The interpretive approach views development as reproductive rather than linear. From this perspective, children enter into a social nexus and, by interacting and negotiating with others, establish understandings that become fundamental social knowledge on which they continually build. Thus the interpretive model refines the notion of stages by viewing development as a productive- reproductive process of increasing density and a reorganisation of knowledge that changes with children’s developing cognitive and language abilities and with changes in their social worlds.’
>
> [Corsaro and Eder 1990 p.2000]

This account of young children’s development situates it in the social world and means that, unlike in the cognitive psychology research described at the beginning of this chapter; development is seen as occurring neither solely in the individual, nor in a series of linear stages. Rather, the stages in children’s development cannot be predetermined as they depend on the child’s web of social relations and their interaction with them (Corsaro 2011 p.26 – 30)). Thus the concept of ‘interpretive reproduction’ offers an account of children’s literacy acquisition that allows for the diversity of experience described by Heath (1983) and the studies in Gregory Long and Volk (2004).

1.4.1.2 Interpreting the social world

The children’s appropriation of ‘information from the adult world’ (Corsaro 2000 p.92) can be seen as part of a process of producing literacy practices that are contingent on the children’s interpretation of their immediate social context and their priorities for, and perceptions of, what would constitute successful participation in that context. Thus the literacy practices reproduced by the children in my study can be situated within the primary school classroom in which they are deployed. Of particular interest in my study is the relationship between the children’s practices of literacy and the disciplinary technologies identified by Foucault (Foucault 1977; 1.3, above) that produce and maintain schooled literacy in the classroom. I remind the reader that the operation of such technologies in the mundane, everyday practices of schooled literacy are intended to have the effect of constraining young children’s literacy practices in order to bring them within the range of what is considered ‘normal’ within dominant discourses.

If young children are viewed as interpretively reproducing literacy practices in a social context in which such technologies are deployed, their reproduction of literacy practices would include not only their cultural and linguistic awareness, but also their awareness and interpretations of the operation of these disciplinary technologies.

1.4.1.3 The importance of peer cultures

Much of Corsaro's research took place in institutions such as nurseries, kindergartens and schools where young children were gathered together in similar age groups. In Corsaro's work 'peer culture' is not shared universally by all children. Rather, through processes of interpretive reproduction, children actively reproduce and participate in shared peer cultures in social interaction with each other in particular social spaces (Corsaro 1992 p.160).

Corsaro defines peer culture as:

> '…a stable set of activities or routines, artifacts, values, and concerns that children produce and share in interaction with peers…'
>
> [Corsaro 2000 p.92]

These peer cultures are an integral part of the socialisation process, as Corsaro explains:

> 'Once children realise that they have the ability to produce their own shared worlds without direct dependence on adults, the nature of the socialisation process itself is transformed… Children now begin routinely to socialise each other and inputs and experiences from the adult world are interpreted within the routines of an increasingly complex and autonomous peer culture…'
>
> [Corsaro 1992 p.162]

Within these peer cultures, children sharing common experiences over time interpretively reproduce routines that enable them to manage those experiences both as children and as a group of children (Evaldsson and Corsaro 1998). Through such

processes children seek to '…gain control of their lives and share that control with others…' (Corsaro and Eder 1990 p.202). Over time, Corsaro argues, children produce a series of peer cultures 'in which childhood knowledge and practices are gradually transformed into the knowledge and skills necessary to participate in the adult world.' (Corsaro 1992 p.162).

This perspective allows scope for the addition of a further layer of complexity to the study of young children's in-school literacy practices. In this chapter I have discussed how young children's literacy practices may draw on: i) the children's acquisition and application of 'basic skills', as assumed in the dominant discourses of schooled literacy (cf Street 21982; Barton 2007; Papen 2016); and ii) their experiences of literacy within their families and communities as suggested in studies drawing on the notion of Literacy as a Social practice (cf Brice-Heath 1983; Gregory 1996, 1997; Gregory and Williams 2000; studies in Gregory, Long and Volk 2004). In this thesis my application of Corsaro's theorisation of young children's interpretive reproduction of peer cultures allows for a further possibility that young children's literacy practices may also draw on shared and stable '…activities or routines, artefacts, values, and concerns that children produce and share in interaction with peers…' [Corsaro 2000 p.92 ibid].

In my study this facilitates a deeper analysis of instances where young children's reproduction of literacy practices differs from those expected by adults. If the reproduction of such practices is assumed to involve processes of interpretive reproduction, then they can be understood as arising from shared and stable current values, attitudes and beliefs about what the children understand themselves to be doing as they practice literacy. Thus, in this thesis, such differences are not perceived as 'mistakes' or 'misconceptions' about the schooled task set, but contingent upon the child's current interpretation of their social world.

I note here that the references to ‘peer culture’ in this thesis concern the social world of the group of children within Year 1 in Oakwood Primary School, more specifically those in Amber Class, as they practice literacy in their classroom. My references to shared ‘values, attitudes and beliefs’ within this peer culture relate to those concerning the children’s interpretations of the requirements of participating in schooled literacy in that classroom. The study’s ethnographic approach to data collection and analysis - as required by an LSP (Literacy as a Social Practice; see 1.2.1, above) - allows for work to secure plausible inferences about such values, attitudes and beliefs to be drawn from careful observation of young children’s literacy practices as they reproduce them in the social world of the classroom. This work is explained in more detail in Chapter 2 of this thesis.

1.4.1.4 Children’s perceptions of schooled literacy

Finally, Corsaro suggests that the ‘cultural routines’ interpretively reproduced by young children enable them to manage the confusions and concerns produced in everyday activities with adults (Corsaro 1988 p.8). Earlier in this chapter I noted that LSP researchers have suggested that children do not necessarily share the values attitudes and beliefs about literacy and schooling that form the dominant schooled literacy of the classroom (cf Bourne 2001, 2002; and Maybin 2007). This means that young children’s encounter with the dominant discourses and practices of schooled literacy may give rise to confusions and concerns arising from such differences. In this thesis Corsaro’s concept of ‘interpretive reproduction’ offers a useful way of understanding how young children manage classroom situations where their interpretations of the social contexts in which they practice literacy differ from those of adults.

In my research I have found that find Corsaro’s concept of interpretive reproduction enables children’s management of such confusions and concerns to be seen as an active and creative process of interpretively reproducing literacy practices that draw on those children’s current perceptions of the discourses and priorities of schooled

literacy. The careful study of such practices can therefore offer insights into young children's values, attitudes and beliefs about the literacy they encounter in schooling. I explore this in some detail in Chapters 5 – 7 of this thesis.

In summary, in my thesis I understand young children to be engaged in the interpretive reproduction of literacy practices. This means that, through active engagement with the social world, young children produce practices of literacy that are contingent upon their interpretations of that world. These interpretations may draw on values, attitudes and beliefs about literacy and schooling that are held and shared within the children's in-class peer culture as well as in their wider social worlds both inside and outside of school. These practices are subject to constant development and change as children gain more experience of those worlds. This means firstly that there can be no predetermined universal path to literacy; and secondly that there may be a diversity of literacy practices in the same social space. Of particular interest in this thesis are practices of literacy that young children develop in the classroom and the way those practices account for the deployment of the disciplinary technologies (Foucault 1977) that produce and maintain the literacy they encounter in school.

I believe that this perspective allows for the '…cognitive, cultural and linguistic flexibility of young children…' (Gregory, Long and Volk 2004 p.2) that some LSP researchers have suggested is omitted from an LSP account of young children's literacy practices. It also situates young children's reproduction of literacy practices within the constraints of the institution of schooling (Bourne 2001, 2002; Maybin 2007) and thus offers insights into what young children think is happening when they practice literacy in schools. In this way, a perspective of young children's participation in schooled literacy activities as involving the interpretive reproduction of literacy practices opens up new possibilities for exploring the relationship between young children, literacy and schooling.

I shall now exemplify the usefulness of interpretive reproduction in the study of young children's engagement with literacy in schooling by offering a brief overview of its application to studies of young children in the US, Italy and UK.

1.4.2 Interpretive Reproduction and Studies of Literacy in Schooling

Researchers applying Corsaro's theorisation of 'interpretive reproduction' to young children's practices of literacy in schooling note: i) the importance of children's peer cultures and social interactions in their literacy acquisition ii) the active role children take in their own literacy acquisition; and iii) their creative appropriation of elements of their social setting to produce literacy practices. For example, Dyson (1987) used the concept of interpretive reproduction in a study of 7 - 8 year old children's 'unintentional helping' of each other within official and unofficial literacy activities in US schools (Dyson 1987). This work stressed the importance of young children's peer cultures in their engagement with schooled literacy (Dyson 1987 p.23 – 24). In particular Dyson described children instructing each other in literacy in schooled spaces which allow peer group collaboration to flourish. She found that '…the children were providing for themselves much more sophisticated lessons than adults could ever hope to.' (p.24) She thus argued for '…recognition and appreciation of young children's social concerns in school' (Dyson 1987 p.23).

Like Dyson, Corsaro and Nelson (2003) stressed the importance of social interaction in young children's acquisition of literacy, particularly that with their peers, in their study of young children's engagement with literacy in American and Italian preschools:

> 'First, they… [the children]… often pursue literacy activities on their own, without the urgings of teachers. They write or draw during their free time and use literacy materials while they are playing. Second, it is clear that the acquisition of literacy is fostered by social interaction among children. Before children are even able to read or write, they engage in activities with one another that involve the use of literacy materials or tools, such as books, writing materials and paper.'
>
> [Corsaro and Nelson 2003 p.221 – 222]

As well as the importance of social interaction within the children's peer culture, this study also demonstrates that young children are actively engaged in literacy practices that support their developing literacy skills in a way that I will also describe in this thesis.

In a more recent UK study of young children's literacy practices in early years compulsory education, Daniels (2014) noted how a group of five-year-old children appropriated aspects of their social setting to reproduce literacy practices. Although her research was concerned with younger children in less formal school situations than that which I will describe, she notes that:

> '…children are successfully and seamlessly pursuing passions and interests in their play, no doubt influenced by texts experienced at home and school, and are reshaping and innovating with these, merging them with the available materials in the school setting.'
>
> [Daniels 2014 p.109]

Thus, in their less formal schooled setting, young children's interpretive reproduction of literacy practices involved the creative appropriation of elements of their social context, in this case their peer culture interests and 'passions', in order to produce literacy practices. Thus writers using Corsaro's concept of 'interpretive reproduction, (Corsaro 2005, 2011) to study young children's literacy practices in school settings note that young children actively and creatively appropriate features of that setting to produce literacy practices in social interaction within their peer culture that enable them to address their own priorities and interests. Such processes support young children's literacy acquisition in meaningful ways.

1.4.3 The role of adults in children's interpretive reproduction of literacy practices

I note here that the privileging of children's perspectives in studies of children's literacy practices means that in such work the role of adults can be seen as marginalised. For example, Handel 1990 argued that the interpretive perspective means that adults can be seen as '…little more than storage bins of cultural information, into which children dip from time to time…' (Handel 1990 p.496). My thesis maintains a focus on the children's production of literacy practices within the schooled literacy domain. Thus it runs the risk of being seen as positioning adults as 'storage bins of cultural knowledge' (Handel, above). However, this is not because it seeks to deny the importance of adult-child relationships, rather it is intended to secure a focus on the children's social activity.

Summary

I have argued that the dominant discourses of literacy, young children and schooling found in the system of mass schooling in the UK are insufficient to account for the complexity of young children's engagement with schooled literacy tasks in the social context of the classroom. Within these discourses, literacy is understood as a singular entity consisting of a set of 'basic skills' that can be applied to any situation where reading and writing is required. Schooling is seen as supporting young children by guiding them through a universal process of the acquisition of these skills, moving them from ignorance to competence as they progress through schooled institutions.

I suggested that the application of a social literacies perspective (LSP) to the study of young children in schooling challenges this dominant discourse by supporting a view of Literacy as a Social Practice contingent on people's interpretation of their immediate social context and their priorities for, and perceptions of, what would constitute successful participation in that context. From this perspective, literacy is closely connected to the social settings in which it is deployed and thus can be explored in

terms of how it is constituted and practised by practitioners according to their interpretation of that setting. Such an approach allows for the diversity of children's pathways to literacy acquisition (Gregory, Long and Volk 2004) and for the presence of different discourses and practices of literacy within the same social setting (cf Bourne 2001, 2002; Maybin 2007). Thus, this perspective offers a theoretical lens that supports a wider view of young children's engagement with literacy in schooling than that offered in dominant discourses. Taking such a view can generate new insights and questions that open up new avenues of enquiry into the relationship between young children and literacy.

One such insight is that the literacy found in schooling - termed in this thesis 'schooled literacy' – is a distinct phenomenon embedded in institutions of state that involves particular discourses and practices. To explore this aspect of schooled literacy I have drawn on the work of Michel Foucault (1977), in particular his account of the disciplinary technologies that regulate diverse populations within state institutions. Adding the concept of discipline to a discussion of schooled literacy supports the exploration of how the mundane regulatory practices of schooling enable the dominant discourses of literacy to act upon young children in schools, naturalising those discourses of literacy and positioning the children as particular literate subjects. This gives a more detailed picture of the literacy that young children encounter in schools.

However, additional perspectives are needed to challenge dominant discourses of young children's literacy acquisition as progression along a staged linear path of 'basic skills' and allow for the '…cognitive, cultural and linguistic flexibility of young children…' (Gregory, Long and Volk 2004 p.2). For this I have drawn on William Corsaro's theorisation of children's socialisation as 'interpretive reproduction'. This theory, drawn from Corsaro's observations of children in institutional settings, allows for children's active and creative agency in developing cultural routines - in this thesis literacy practices - that enable them to participate in those settings. In doing so it allows for a

study of how children's peer group values, attitudes and beliefs about literacy and schooling are incorporated into their literacy practices, as well as for how those practices account for the maintenance of schooled discourses of literacy through the application of disciplinary technologies.

To sum up, my research aims to address the question of 'What happens when young children encounter schooled literacy?' by:

- drawing on the theoretical perspectives described in this chapter that challenge dominant assumptions about the relationship between young children, schooling and literacy
- adopting an ethnographic approach to research which places literacy practices at the centre of the enquiry
- paying close attention to the social practices of literacy found in schooling, in particular those of young children and the dominant literacy that they encounter in the classroom
- focusing on the relationship between the children's practices of literacy and the organisational procedures and practices of the school

Taking the theoretical and methodological approaches described in Chapters 1 and 2 of this thesis, I aim to add greater depth to existing knowledge about the relationship between young children, literacy and schooling.

In subsequent chapters I shall build on these theoretical concepts as I present my analysis of the ethnographic data I collected in my year-long study of a class of 5-6 year old children in a West London primary school in the early twenty first century. I begin in the next chapter with a description of my ethnographic approach to data collection and analysis, as demanded both from and LSP perspective and by the work of William Corsaro.

Chapter 2 Researching Literacy, Schools and Young Children

In this chapter, I describe the ethnographic approach that I took in order to address my research question:

What happens when young children encounter schooled literacy?

An ethnographic approach to research is central to two of the three theoretical perspectives that I described in Chapter 1 of this thesis – those of a) Literacy as a Social Practice (LSP, Street 1984; Barton and Hamilton 1998) – in which people's practices of literacy are contingent upon their interpretations of the priorities of the social context in which they are found; and b) Corsaro's theorisation of interpretive reproduction (Corsaro 2005, 2011), where children actively and creatively reproduce social practices specifically adapted to meet what they consider to be the priorities of their social world. The emphasis in both perspectives on firstly the situation of practices in the social world in which they occur and secondly the contingency of practitioners' interpretations of that social world means that taking an ethnographic approach to research is particularly apt for studying young children's interpretive reproduction of literacy practices. I note here that whilst the term 'Ethnography' is associated with Anthropology, 'taking an ethnographic perspective' allows the principles of an ethnographic approach to be applied to studies from a variety of disciplines including education (cf Wolcott 1997, Bourne 2002, Maybin 2007).

In this chapter, I begin with a fuller description of the importance of an ethnographic approach in my research. This is accompanied by an overview of specific reflexive considerations (see 2.1.2) and a summary of the ethical issues arising from researching young children. Following this, I offer a reflexive account of the specific methods I used, firstly for data collection and secondly for the analysis of that data. The chapter finishes with a summary of my activities in the field – in this case a Year 1 (age

5-6) class of children in a state primary school in North West London in the academic year 2010 – 2011. This is accompanied by a detailed description of my data set.

2.1 The importance of an ethnographic approach to researching young children's encounter with schooled literacy

Here, I describe how the principles of an ethnographic approach to research support my adoption of the theoretical perspectives I described in Chapter 1 of this thesis. I demonstrate how adopting such an approach to research places the literacy practices found in a North West London primary school classroom at the centre of the enquiry. This allows for the study of firstly the moment-by-moment unfolding of young children's literacy practices in the complex social world of the classroom; and secondly the effect the procedures and practices of schooled institutions have on this process.

2.1.1 The definition of ethnographic research and my research aims

Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) outline a core definition for ethnographic work based on what ethnographers do. This includes five features – i) the study of people in everyday contexts; ii) the use of a range of sources for data collection; iii) the 'unstructured' nature of data collection; iv) the small scale focus of the research; and (v) an emphasis on interpreting human practices, their meanings and functions and how these affect wider contexts (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007 p.3). Here I describe each of these features in turn in relation to my research.

2.1.1.1 The study of agents in their social contexts

The Literacy as a Social Practice (LSP) perspective I have adopted to explore young children's encounter with schooled literacy (Chapter 1:1.2) demands a research approach that places the literacy practitioner, rather than the level of skills they have acquired, at the centre of the enquiry and considers their values, attitudes and beliefs about what they are doing as they practice literacy in the social world (cf Barton and

Hamilton 1998). Such methods should therefore connect literacy to context and to people.

The people with whom this thesis is concerned are young children. Researchers studying young children's literacy acquisition emphasise that:

> '…understanding how young children become literate requires research on the processes and contexts of their everyday practices as social beings…'
>
> [Dicks, Flewitt, Lancaster and Pahl 2011 p.229]

Dicks et al (ibid) emphasise that young children are social beings whose everyday practices are imbued with meaning and situated in particular contexts. In the case of my research the relationship between the 'processes and contexts' of young children's 'everyday practices' (Dicks et al, ibid) is conceptualised by William Corsaro's theorisation of young children's socialisation as involving 'interpretive reproduction' (Corsaro 2005, 2011; Chapter 1: 1.4). Corsaro finds that observing children in their everyday social contexts is the most appropriate way of understanding their interpretation of those contexts. He argues that '…many features of … [young children's]… interactions and cultures are produced and shared in the present and cannot easily be obtained by way of reflective interviews or surveys.' (Corsaro 2005 p.50). Thus, in order to understand how young children interpretively reproduce literacy practices in response to their encounter with schooled literacy it is important to observe this process in the social context of the classroom in which it occurs - in the case of my research a Year 1 class in a West London state primary school.

The study of agents in their social contexts also refines my use of the third theoretical perspective, that of Foucault's theorisation of schools as disciplinary institutions (Chapter 1 1.3). Foucault's conceptualisation of disciplinary power has been invaluable in my work as a way of explaining the production and maintenance of the dominant form of literacy that young children encounter in schooling (Chapter 3). However,

Foucault's work has been critiqued as having a greater focus on the realisation of power than on how people manage the effects of power technologies (see, for example, Said in Hoy 1986 p.152). Thus it has been argued that Foucault's theorisations pay greater attention to how dominant discourses are produced and maintained than to how people manage their encounter with such discourses. A strictly Foucauldian perspective allows the children's management of their encounter with the dominant schooled literacy in the classroom to be seen as involving either 'subjection' to such dominance or ongoing 'resistance' in terms of a permanent struggle against its effects (Ball 2013 p.146 i). In my work to understand the complexity of Amber Class children's literacy practices, concepts such as 'subjection' and 'resistance' do not offer sufficient scope for interpreting young children's adaptive and creative agency when managing their encounter with the dominant discourses of schooled literacy. (Chapter 1: 1.3.2). However, I found that Corsaro's concept of 'interpretive reproduction (Chapter 1:1.4) offers a useful complement to Foucault's conceptualisation of disciplinary power by ensuring that the active and creative aspects of young children's encounter with such power can be more fully accounted for. This encounter can only be captured through careful observation of young children in the social contexts in which this encounter takes place (see above). Thus my adoption of an ethnographic approach to researching the effects of disciplinary technologies in a social context in which they are deployed supports the refinement of a Foucauldian approach to the analysis of dominant discourses in two ways: i) it enables an exploration of how such discourses - in this case those of schooled literacy - are enacted in everyday practice (Dixon 2011); and ii) it offers scope for understanding how people – in this case, young children – engage with such discourses through their reproduction of literacy practices.

2.1.1.2 Using a range of sources of data

In research such as mine, which seeks to understand practices which are '…produced and shared in the present…' (Corsaro 2005, p.50) it is useful to draw on a range of sources of data. Young children's interpretive reproduction of literacy practices occurs

in their moment-by-moment engagement with a complex social world (cf Corsaro 2005) and is subject to ongoing processes of development and refinement (cf Corsaro and Eder 1990). Therefore such practices may only exist fleetingly in the present (cf Corsaro 2005; Dyson 2010). The use of a range of sources of data supports firstly the capture of young children's unfolding literacy practices; and secondly the compilation of an account of the relationship of those practices to the complex social world in which they are produced.

The data collected for my study includes photographs, documents, audio and video recordings, and interviews (see 2.4.3. below for a table of data collected). This has allowed me to relate different aspects of the children's literacy practices - for example, their spoken interactions, deployment of basic skills and use of classroom resources - to one another and thus produce fuller and more plausible accounts of their literacy practices. A more detailed description of my use of a range of sources of data is provided later in the chapter in reference to data analysis.

2.1.1.3 The unstructured nature of data collection

In order to challenge dominant assumptions about the relationship between young children, schooling and literacy, my research aimed to adopt wider theoretical perspectives on young children's classroom literacy practices than those allowed for in the dominant discourses of schooled literacy (see Chapter 1:1.1). The 'unstructured' nature of data collection allowed by an ethnographic approach to research supported this.

Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) discuss two aspects of the 'unstructured' nature of data collection. Firstly, the research does not follow through a fixed and detailed research design from the start. Secondly, research from ethnographic perspectives allows categories to be '…generated out of the process of data analysis.' (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007 p.3). Thus, in ethnographic research, the research design and

categories for analysis can evolve as the data collection progresses. This approach was particularly important to my research as I could move away from predefined categories arising from dominant discourses and consider alternatives. As my research progressed, I was able to adapt and modify my approach as I encountered puzzles or problems that the assumptions of dominant discourses could not fully account for. I shall address this point further in section 2.3 of this chapter with reference to my process of data analysis.

2.1.1.4 In depth study of a particular case

The data I present in this thesis shows how the theoretical framework described in Chapter 1 can be applied to children's everyday activities in schools, enabling new insights into and questions about the relationship between young children, schooling and literacy. An in-depth study of a particular case is helpful in such a study as it:

> '…show(s) how general principles deriving from some theoretical orientation manifest themselves in some given sense of particular circumstances.'
>
> [Mitchell 1984 p.239]

In this way, the small scale of my case study enables me to explore in depth how alternative theoretical perspectives can be applied to exploring the familiar and mundane everyday processes of literacy learning and teaching in classrooms.

A further advantage of my small-scale case study is that it allowed for the exploration of complexity. In Chapter 1, I argued that the theoretical perspectives adopted in my research support a view of young children as actively producing literacy practices based on their interpretations of the complex social space of the classroom. Such a perspective means that it is important to adopt a research method that anticipates a certain amount of complexity. In my research this has been achieved through the in-depth ethnographic study of a particular case (cf Blommaert and Jie 2010).

2.1.1.5 An emphasis on interpreting human practices

From both an LSP and an interpretive reproduction (Corsaro 2005, 2011) perspective, children's social practices - in this case of literacy - are contingent upon their interpretation of their immediate social context and their priorities for, and perceptions of, what would constitute successful participation in that context. This means that inferential work is required to explore aspects of literacy practices that are not directly observable or measureable, such as children's values, attitudes and beliefs about the literacy practices in which they are engaged (cf Hamilton 2000 p.18). Exploring young children's encounter with schooled literacy therefore entails interpreting '…the meanings and functions of their human practices' (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007 p.3) in order to infer how they understand the processes of being taught to read and write in school. Taking the ethnographic approach to data collection and analysis described in this chapter has supported this inferential work.

To summarise, Hammersley and Atkinson's (2007) identification of five features of an ethnographic approach suggest that it is most suited to addressing my research question within the theoretical framework I described in Chapter 1. The ethnographic approach to research I have adopted in order to address the question 'What happens when young children encounter schooled literacy?' has allowed me to: i) draw on the theoretical perspectives described in Chapter 1 in order to challenge dominant assumptions about the relationship between young children, schooling and literacy; ii) study young children's interpretive reproduction of literacy practices in the everyday setting of the social world of the classroom in which they occurred, as demanded by those theoretical perspectives; iii) pay close attention to the practices of literacy I found in Amber Classroom, in particular the relationship between schooled practices of literacy and those of the children who encountered them; iv) investigate a case in some depth, paying close attention to the meanings children have assigned to the social practices they engage in.

However such an approach requires an ongoing practice of reflexivity in order to secure the plausibility and credibility of my findings (cf Hammersley 1992). Whilst reflexivity is important in all aspects of research, I now turn to discuss some particular considerations for my research process.

2.1.2 The importance of reflexivity in my research

Reflexivity is key to an ethnographic research approach, supporting the need to produce an account that is plausible, thorough and offers a detailed account that is faithful to the participants' experiences. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) explain that such reflexivity involves:

> '…a more deliberate and systematic approach than is common for most of us most of the time, one in which data is specifically sought to illuminate research questions and are carefully recorded; and where the process of analysis draws on previous studies and intense reflection, including the critical assessment of competing interpretations.'
>
> [Hammersley and Atkinson 2007 p.4]

Reflexivity forms part of the description of my processes of data collection and analysis which follows in the following sections of this chapter. For the moment however I detail some more general reflexive considerations for my particular research process. These are: i) the scope of my research; and ii) the particular considerations involved in working with children. This is followed by a discussion of my positionality in the field. This discussion includes reference to my use of fieldnotes to support reflexivity, however a fuller explication of my use of fieldnotes is included later in the chapter (2.2.1).

2.1.2.1 The scope of my research

I note here four considerations concerning the scope of my research that must be borne in mind when reading this thesis, namely: a) the small scale nature of the study; b) the focus on children's rather than adult's classroom practices; c) the situation of those practices in school; d) the focus on print literacy; and e) the focus on the moment

by moment unfolding of literacy practices rather than the development of those practices over time

Firstly, my research consists of an in-depth study of a single group of children in a single educational context. This means that I cannot aim to make generalisable statements that can be applied across educational contexts. However I can exemplify the validity of the theoretical perspectives I have applied to further studies of similar phenomena in other contexts (cf Mitchell 1984, above).

Secondly it is beyond the scope of this thesis to analyse the individual school or teacher's pedagogical practice. The findings of this thesis relate to young children's management of schooled literacy. From the outset of my research, I was determined to focus on the literacy practices of children in the social context of schooling. One of the reasons for my research was my concern that too little was known about what young children did as they encountered schooled literacy (see thesis introduction). Thus the purpose of my research was to investigate the children's encounter with a particular form of literacy that is embedded in the systems and structures of schooling, termed 'schooled literacy' by those studying literacy from a Literacy as a Social practice (LSP) perspective (Chapter 1 1.2.1; 1.2.2.1) and described in Chapter 3 of this thesis in relation to the work of Michel Foucault. This means that I worked to ensure my research remained firmly focused on the children's encounter with this schooled literacy, as I describe it in Chapter 3 of this thesis, rather than their encounter with the pedagogical practices of a specific teacher. Thus, whilst I acknowledge that the teacher played a significant role in mediating schooled literacy to the children (Chapter 3:3.2.5), her practices were not intended as a focus for the research. This was explained to the teacher at the point of my seeking her informed consent to participate in the research and contributed to her generous participation in the project.

Thirdly, the thesis' focus on young children's encounter with *schooled* literacy means that little data was collected on the children's social and cultural backgrounds. Thus assumptions cannot be made as to the relationship between children's outside and inside school experiences of literacy. Research in these areas makes a helpful contribution to knowledge about the pedagogical practices of teachers and schools and young children's social practices of literacy (cf Heath 1983; Gregory and Williams 2000; Studies in Gregory, Long and Volk 2004; Baker, Williams and Street 2004; Pahl 2009; Papen 2016). However this is not the focus of this thesis.

Additionally, the focus on young children's encounter with schooled literacy has meant that this thesis has focused on children's practices of *print* literacy as this was emphasised in school curricula at the time I collected my data. This does not mean that this thesis does not recognise the impact of new technologies and popular culture on young children's literacy practices (cf Dyson 1999, 2003; McTavish 2009; Wohlwend 2009). Indeed my data contains instances of Amber Class children referencing popular culture and new technologies in their classroom activities. However the focus of my research was on the children's engagement with school assigned literacy tasks in such lessons and this usually involved the reading or writing of printed texts.

Finally, the focus of my analysis was the moment-by moment unfolding of young children's literacy practices in the social context of the classroom. Although the data was collected over time (one academic year), the study was not designed to track the development of young children's literacy practices over the period of data collection. I remind the reader that the aim of the thesis is to challenge the assumptions of the dominant schooled literacy by exploring the relationship between young children's in-class literacy practices and the institution of schooling. Thus, whilst there is a strong suggestion of the development of the children's practices over time in my data, an analysis of this phenomenon would be better addressed in further research.

2.1.2.2 Studying young children

My study's focus on the literacy practices of young children has necessitated particular reflexive and ethical considerations. These considerations include what Mayall (2000) terms 'generational issues' that concern the power relationships between adults and children (see also Holmes 1998). Mayall describes how:

> '…according to my information from children…a central characteristic of adults is that they have power over children…'
>
> [Mayall 2000 p.110]

Mayall therefore stresses that researchers must take generational issues into account when studying children[6]. In particular such considerations affect the role the researcher adopts in their relationships with the children they study (cf Holmes 1998). In my research I adopted different roles as I participated in the research setting (2.2.1.1, below) and had to be reflexive about how these roles affected the children's behaviour. In particular, I found that issues of power between adults and children were of relevance in terms of young children's management of interview situations, as I shall detail in section 2.2.3 (below).

2.1.2.3 My positionality in the field

The positions I occupied in terms of my physical presence in, and personal perceptions of, the field affected my research at all stages of data collection and analysis. Heath and Street describe the ethnographic researcher as '…the ultimate instrument of fieldwork.' (2008 p.57). For this reason, ethnographic research is "…inherently interpretive, subjective and partial.' (ibid p.45). More specifically in relation to ethnographic research in education, Wolcott argues that educational researchers often feel so well versed about what goes on in schools that they become their own key-

[6] NB Greene and Hill (2005) and Connolly (2008) stress that children are a diverse group and thus power relations will be perceived differently by different children. Thus, as with any form of social interaction it is important not to make assumptions based on participants' membership of a group, but to look at the particular circumstances of the interaction.

informant (p161) '…telling us what everything means …rather than allowing those in the setting to give their vision of their world.' (Wolcott 1997 p.161)

Thus my research into a field with which I have been familiar with for many years in my professional roles (see thesis introduction) can be taken as '…inherently interpretive, subjective and partial…' (Heath and Street 2008 ibid). However, in the course of my research, I worked to ensure the 'interpretive, subjective and partial' (Heath and Street 2008 ibid) aspects of this thesis drew on the theoretical framework described in Chapter 1 (sections 3 – 5), rather than the dominant discourses of literacy, young children and schooling (Chapter 1:1.1) that I was familiar with using in my professional career in schools. This has been a challenging process in terms of both my engagement with the field and my data analysis.

Before moving to discuss this, I note that, whilst the course of this research certainly changed my personal perspective on the relationship between young children, schooling and literacy in ways I had not anticipated, the focus of this thesis is on challenging dominant discourses of young children, schooling and literacy. Thus, whilst the development of my personal thinking about the phenomena I studied was certainly a part of the research process, in this thesis it is a consideration for reflexivity rather than a topic for explicit discussion. For this reason, the changes to my personal perspectives on education are not included as part of the thesis findings; however it is relevant to include in this chapter a discussion of particular effects that my professional experience in education had on my research. These were: a) my relationship with the dominant discourses of young children, schooling and literacy; and b) impression management (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995 p.83) – that is how others involved in the research viewed me. Before doing so I offer a brief discussion of how my fieldnotes contributed to my reflexivity on the different ways in which my engagement with the field could be understood.

2.1.2.4 The role of fieldnotes to support reflexivity on personal subjectivity

Blommaert and Jie suggest that the subjective nature of fieldnotes '…provide us with invaluable information, not only about what we witnessed in the field but even more importantly *how* we witnessed it…' (Blommaert and Jie 2010 p.37, my italics). In this way, both my fieldnotes (and other notes made as I analysed my data) documented the transformation of my knowledge about the field as I moved from a reliance on the dominant assumptions I was accustomed to drawing on in my professional career to understanding the phenomena I witnessed in terms of my theoretical framework. Such notes therefore served as a record of how I constructed the field in different ways according to my then understanding of it (Blommaert and Jie 2010 ibid). In this way, the subjective nature of fieldnote writing helped me account for my assumptions about my research setting in my interpretation of my data. My use of fieldnotes is therefore important in the discussion of my positionality in the field that follows here.

2.1.2.5 My relationship with the dominant discourses of young children, schooling and literacy

In the introduction to this thesis, I described how the educational policy and research that I had become dissatisfied with in my professional career drew on the dominant discourses of schooled literacy discussed in Chapter 1 (Chapter 1: 1.1; see also the Thesis Introduction). My fieldnotes demonstrate a tendency on my part to return to these dominant discourses when making my observations, as the following extract demonstrates:

> '…[the class teacher]…asks me to take a phonics lesson for a small group … During the lesson I find that I am definitely viewing the situation as a teacher, making mental assessments of where the children are and where the teaching needs to start. I note a possible issue in application of skills for reading, particularly when Dean asks me to 'do' 'Dad' or 'Mum' for him to read.'
>
> [Fieldnotes 09/09/2010]

In the extract from my fieldnotes above, I found myself adopting the viewpoint of a teacher. I assessed Dean's responses to phonics teaching and mentally planned a course of intervention to enable him to progress in his phonics learning. This 'teacher response' drew heavily on the dominant discourses of young children, literacy and schooling.

However, in my research I aimed to take the viewpoint of a researcher who was chiefly concerned to understand how the children's encounter with schooled literacy appeared to them in their social world. Thus, when reconsidering an incident such as that described above, I attempted to understand the activities described from the perspectives offered by the theoretical framework outlined in Chapter 1. This focus required careful and sometimes challenging personal reflexivity throughout the research process. Such reflexivity is partly illustrated by the data analysis notes made some time after I left the field. For example, I noted how my initial assumptions about the field affected my data collection and analysis in the early stages of my research:

> 'Fieldnotes very much what I was looking for at the time – reflect my own pre-occupations in the first term…'
>
> [Data analysis notes 19/06/2016]

Thus my professional familiarity with the dominant discourses of young children, schooling and literacy, coupled with my determination to understand the field from alternative theoretical perspectives, means that the analysis represented in this thesis is '…inherently interpretive, subjective and partial…' (Heath and Street 2008 ibid). However this subjectivity has contributed to this thesis' work to challenge dominant assumptions by adopting alternative theoretical perspectives in order to explore familiar phenomena.

2.1.2.6 Impression management

As a participant in an educational research setting, I had some impact on the children and on the teachers, parents and other adults whom I encountered. Managing this impact is described by Hammersley and Atkinson (1995 p.83) as 'impression management' where fieldworkers must be aware of how they are viewed by those they will be working alongside.

Below I offer examples from my fieldnotes on how my presence in the setting impacted on the behaviour of other participants in the setting. The first concerns the inevitable power relations between adults and children (Mayall 2008; see 2.1.2.2, above; 2.3.1.3 below). The incident described took place early on in my research when I was in the school's outside play area, observing the routines and behaviours of different groups of children:

> '…in the absence of another adult I deal with a large crowd of children who have gathered around a piece of long grass with a frog in it. I ask them to put down anything they have in their hands and to listen so they hear how distressed the frog is. I manage to disperse them. The only reason I did not raise my voice was because I was unsure of my role in the school. However the children all accepted I had a right to tell them what to do, even though the majority of them had never seen me before. … Apart from the ID badge from the school I wore no uniform, I could have been a visiting contractor, a parent or even some-one who had climbed over the fence for all they knew.'
>
> [Fieldnotes 09/09/2010]

This account illustrates how my adult status in a school setting affected the way the children responded to me. This is evidence of the 'generational issues' identified by Mayall .(Mayall 2008; see 2.1.2.2, above).

I attempted to minimise such generational issues by being careful not to adopt a disciplinary role, unless I was engaged in directly teaching a group of children. Whilst this was often challenging for me as I felt a greater disciplinary stance was expected of

me by other adults in the school, it did support my work to present myself to the children as an adult who was interested in children's worlds rather than an adult who was concerned with securing the children's 'good' behaviour. However whilst such generational issues might have been mitigated to some degree, they inevitably affected the way the children responded to me (see also 2.2.3, below).

Furthermore, my presence in the classroom inevitably affected the teacher's classroom behaviour. Wolcott (1997) describes the role of 'visitor observer' as being well structured in schools since teachers and pupils are used to being observed in the classroom by a range of professionals (1997 p.159). Certainly, in the setting I studied, the class teacher often talked about observations by personnel such as Local Education Authority inspectors and the Head Teacher. However, in the current UK educational context, such observations are most often evaluative, involving judgements of both the children and teacher's classroom 'performances'. Particularly in the early stages of my fieldwork, the class teacher often viewed my presence in the classroom in this way, as the extract from my fieldnotes below demonstrates. The incident described took place after a literacy lesson that I videoed in November 2010:

> 'For the next half an hour I am upstairs in the copy room, making copies of children's writing and talking to …[the class teacher]…, who wants some feedback on the lesson. The kind of observations I do here however are very different from those I do at work…[as a Primary National Strategy consultant in the teaching of literacy]…. I can offer some feedback, but am uncomfortable about offering more. We agree that I will carry out a writing lesson for …[the class teacher]…to watch, and I talk about aspects such as differentiated success criteria and target setting.'
>
> [Fieldnotes 05/11/2010]

Thus the class teacher did perceive me, especially in the early stages of my research, as an educational consultant and was particularly eager to draw on my experience in such a role. This meant that my presence, impacted on the teacher's classroom practice. I note however that the teacher's classroom practices are not a focus of this

study, which is concerned with young children's encounter with schooled literacy and the study was presented to the class teacher as such. Thus the teacher's pedagogical practices are not discussed in the thesis.

Thus my position in the field affected both my own interpretations and my respondents' behaviour. This meant that it was important in my research to have a reflexive awareness of the possible influence my professional role might have on my interpretation of my observations

There are also ethical issues related to studying young children as I discuss here.

2.1.3 Ethical Issues arising from my research

My research has entailed the ongoing consideration of ethical issues. Brooks, Riele and Maguire (2014) explain that:

> '…ethical considerations do not cease to be relevant once 'ethics approval' has been gained but, instead, ongoing ethical reflexivity is required throughout the process of research.'
>
> [Brooks, Riele and Maguire 2014 p.38]

Therefore, as well as obtaining ethical approval for my research from King's College Research Ethics Committee (see Appendix A for approval letter) and having the signed consent of the children's parents and the school's teachers to participate in the research, ethical considerations were an ongoing part of reflexivity in my research process. My main considerations were i) ensuring children consented to the research; ii) the ongoing negotiation of consent for participation; and iii) the management and protection of the data I collected. I offer a brief overview of these considerations here.

Firstly, I was careful to ensure that the children were aware of my purpose in the classroom as well as the purpose of the recording devices I used. This helped me

secure the children's informed consent to their participation in the research (Brooks, te Riele and Maguire 2014). In instances where children refused permission to wear the microphone, objected to my observations or were reluctant to participate in interviews, their wishes were adhered to. Secondly, ongoing consent was also sought from adults involved in the research. For example the class teacher requested that I not visit the school in particular weeks and there were instances where recordings were deleted at the request of adults working with the children.

In terms of the management and protection of the data I collected, it was important to ensure that data was securely stored and that none of the participants in the research could be formally identified in any publications. Actions to secure this ensure that my research complied with both the requirements of King's College Research Ethics Committee (2016) and the Data Protection Act (1998).

2.1.4 A note on respondent validation

An additional area for consideration in research such as mine is the testing of the analyst's account in further discussion with research participants in order to establish whether those participants recognise the validity of the researcher's account. (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). Such respondent validation has the potential to strengthen the validity of research findings; however it can be viewed as problematic (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007 p. 181 – 183). In my research there were issues in discussing my findings with both the children and the class teacher, as I describe here.

Firstly, the young age of the children created two issues. These were a) the difficulties I encountered in explaining the purpose of such discussions to young children; and b) generational issues (see 2.1.2.2, above). Firstly, in order to ask the children's opinions of the digital data I had collected, I experimented with playing back video footage to the children. However in these instances the children tended to focus on watching themselves on screen or joining in with the lessons they were watching. Secondly, my

discussions with the children relating to particular classroom events gave rise to generational issues. On occasion I followed up conversations or observations recorded in my fieldnotes with further discussions with the children involved. In an incident discussed in depth in Chapter 7 (7.4.2) I attempted to talk to one of the children – Colin – about my observation of his use of a copying strategy for spelling during a writing assessment lesson. Colin's response to my question suggested he did not want to discuss an incident which could be taken as non-compliance with adult set classroom rules. In this instance, Colin's concern to present himself as complying with the school's requirements for the writing assessment meant I felt I could not pursue the matter further. This is an example of how young children's perception of adults as having power over them (Mayall 2000) can affect their participation in research (see also 2.2.3 below – on interviewing young children in schooled situations).

Further issues arose from the slow and detailed method of data analysis I engaged in (2.3, below). The time consuming nature of my micro-analysis of my digital data meant that much of my inferential work was conducted up to three years after data collection. In the case of the children I felt that to return to a discussion of key incidents from the data after a space of some years would not be productive as the children were likely to have forgotten the incidents in question. It is also likely that, after an additional period of time in the institution of schooling, the children would understand such incidents from a different perspective than that they would have held at an earlier stage in their school careers. This time lapse between data collection and analysis also meant that I could not discuss my findings with the class teacher as she left the school at the end of the academic year in which I collected my data and subsequently left the country. Thus, whilst respondent validation can support the establishment of validity in ethnographic research (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007), it proved problematic for this particular study.

The reflexive and ethical issues outlined above inform the following discussion of each method I chose to investigate my research question. This discussion is in two parts. The first, in section 2.2 of the chapter, concerns my methods of data collection. The second, in section 2.3 concerns my methods of data analysis.

Before moving on to this discussion, I note that the use of particular methods in my research was informed by the work of researchers adopting specific methodological approaches alongside an ethnographic one, in particular those described as multi-modal (for example Flewitt 2011; Jewitt 2012; Mavers 2012) or linguistic ethnography (Rampton 2007; Lefstein 2008; Maybin 2009). Whilst the work of these authors has been invaluable to my thinking about the collection and analysis of ethnographic data, my research was primarily designed as an ethnographic study of young children's classroom literacy practices and the adoption of particular research methods has been related to this design.

I now move to describe my methods of data collection.

2.2 Data Collection

Wolcott (1997) identifies four field techniques for ethnography in education – i) Participant Observation; ii) interviewing; iii) the use of written sources; and iv) the use of non-written sources. I use these categorisations here to describe the methods I used to explore Amber Class' children's encounter with schooled literacy in a West London Primary School. In the following section I look firstly at my primary method of data collection, Participant Observation, including the role of the researcher, the use of fieldnotes and the use of digital technologies. From there I move on to discuss interviewing and written and non-written sources.

2.2.1 Participant Observation

Emerson et al (2007) define Participant Observation as:

> '…establishing a place in some natural setting on a relatively long term basis in order to investigate, experience and represent the social life and social processes that occur in that setting…'
>
> [Emerson, Fretz and Shaw 2007 p.352]

In describing what 'Participant Observation' meant for my study I will firstly discuss what participating in the research setting meant for me in terms of the roles I adopted as an observer; and secondly the methods I used for collecting data generated as a result of my participation, in this case fieldnotes and digital technologies.

2.2.1.1 Participating in the research setting

My observational role in the field was what Wolcott (1997) would describe as a 'visitor observer' (see 2.1.2.6, above). However, the nature of this observational role varied. Sometimes I sat at a table with the children and recorded their interactions in fieldnotes or directed recording devices towards them. At other times, I sat out of the children's eye line and had no direct contact with them at all. As well as my observational role, there were occasions when I directly intervened in the setting, such as when I taught groups of children or took children out of class for interviews. I have discussed how these varied roles had the potential to impact upon the research setting firstly in terms of on my perception of the setting and secondly in terms of participants' actions and responses to me (see 2.1.2.6, above).

2.2.1.2 Using fieldnotes to record my observations.

My main method of recording observations in the classroom was to take fieldnotes, which recorded all my observations from entering to leaving the school. These notes were written in the school and typed up after I had left the school. Hammersley and

Atkinson (2007) describe how the attention paid to the taking of high quality fieldnotes is integral to the adoption of an ethnographic approach to research saying that:

> '…with inadequate note-taking the exercise… [of research]…could be like using an expensive camera with a poor quality film.'
>
> [Hammersley and Atkinson 2007 p.142]

It is therefore important to pay careful attention to the taking and use of fieldnotes. In this section of the chapter, I shall consider how: i) notes are originally taken in the field and ii) notes become 'fieldnotes' through the process of writing up. Such considerations support reflexive work to account for my varied roles in the field when interpreting my data.

2.2.1.3 How fieldnotes are taken

It is important for the researcher to note that their fieldnotes are affected by *when* they are taken (Emerson et al 2007). For example, the act of note taking whilst in the field makes the observer role explicit and the participants may adapt their behaviour accordingly. As well as this, '…people often develop expectations about what events and topics the fieldworker should record and question why the fieldworker is or is not taking note of particular events' (Emerson et al 2007 p.356).

This explicitness can have the effect of making participants more aware of the research process. In my research the children asked what I was writing, made suggestions for additions and, towards the end of my time at the school, imitated my practice of writing fieldnotes, producing their own 'fieldnotes' in play which I took away as data. An example of the children's fieldnotes is offered in Appendix D. In this example, Meena describes the beginning of the school day, noting what individual children and adults are doing as she watches. Meena's fieldnotes suggest that she was aware of the purpose of fieldnote writing and thus had an awareness of what I was doing as I made fieldnotes in the class. Corsaro notes a similar effect in his own research when the

children he observed made fieldnotes (Corsaro 2005). He suggests that this meant that the research process was made more transparent to the children and therefore more ethical. I felt that this accorded with my research experience; the children's behaviour as I made fieldnotes suggested to me they were confident in their relationship with me as a researcher and that they tended to contribute what they wished to be made known (Corsaro 2005 p.53).

As well as taking notes in the field, during the process of typing up my fieldnotes I often added further observations which I could not record at the time, such as conversations with the class teacher or things I noted during sessions in which I taught the children. Emerson et al (2007) describe how making notes after leaving the field has an impact on the notes themselves, which may be less detailed, and also on the participants' responses since the absence of immediate note taking may lessen the explicitness of the observer role. This latter aspect was a particular consideration for my recording of informal conversations between the teacher and myself in the course of my time in the classroom. Throughout this time, my relationship with the teacher remained friendly and we were able to exchange views and ideas about the research in a way which put us both on an equal footing. However there are two ethical considerations with this method of recording interview data. Firstly, my later recording of these informal discussions means that they reflect my interpretation of what the teacher said rather than the teacher's words. They therefore reflect my subjective interpretation of what was said (see 2.2.1.4, below). Secondly, the lack of any visible means of recording our conversations may have led the teacher to be less guarded in her responses. Thus, relevant comments made under these circumstances were followed up more formally with a reminder of my researcher role.

2.2.1.4 Fieldnotes in the process of writing up

Emerson, Fretz and Shaw (2007) suggest that '…fieldnote descriptions are not mere reports of 'the facts' but rather implicitly theorised accounts…' (2007 p.358). Thus in

writing up fieldnotes the researcher constructs a ‘field’ for academic exploration which will be subjective and partial (Atkinson 1992 p.5). Therefore fieldnotes should be read and interpreted according to the decisions the researcher made about what to write down from the day’s observations.

In my research my fieldnotes supported reflexivity about the assumptions I drew on as I recorded my observations. In doing so they helped me identify interpretations that arose from my professional experience of working in schools and consider other interpretations for what I had observed (see 2.1.2.3, above). In this way, the subjective nature of fieldnote writing helped me account for my assumptions about my research setting in my interpretation of my data.

Over a year of regular visits to the classroom I built up a corpus of detailed fieldnotes (see 2.4.3 below). Although my fieldnotes recorded formal ‘literacy’ lessons, such as writing, handwriting and spelling lessons, I also recorded any events that occurred whilst I was with the class, such as music lessons, class photographs and assemblies. This was intended to support my understanding of how formal literacy lessons were situated in the school day. However it also: i) revealed additional schooled literacy practices to those that I observed in formal literacy lessons and ii) meant I observed how children made use of literacy in school outside of official teaching and learning contexts. On occasion, my fieldnotes also included other sources of data. For example, where I felt I could not adequately describe in words a child’s body language I may have taken a photograph or short section of video. These recordings supported the function of the fieldnotes rather than representing an alternative method of documenting the field.

To summarise, my decisions about taking fieldnotes offered not only an account of what I observed in the field, but also the assumptions I made as I observed it. It also supported my ongoing ethical reflexivity in emphasising my purpose in the field to

research participants. However such fieldnotes were not the only way I used to document my observations in the classroom. In the next part of this chapter I discuss how I used digital technologies to make audio and video recordings of my research setting.

2.2.2 Using digital technologies to record the research setting

I made digital recordings of the classroom in different ways and for different purposes. The equipment I used comprised a Digital Voice Recorder (DVR), a stills camera with a limited video function, a video camera and a video camera attached to a Bluetooth microphone (which operated in a similar way to a radio microphone). These technologies were used for observations of formal literacy lessons, interviews, and the collection of data such as classroom displays and children's work. Here I describe how my use of these technologies was invaluable in addressing my research aim to pay close attention to young children's social practices of literacy (2.2.2.1). This is followed by an overview of reflexive considerations for the use of digital technologies in research (2.2.2.2). Following this I offer a description of how I used firstly microphones (2.2.2.3) and secondly video recording (2.2.2.4) in my data collection.

2.2.2.1 Using digital recording to privilege young children's perspectives

Authors using digital technologies, in particular radio microphones, to support ethnographic research in schools stress their usefulness in focusing attention on student and children's perspectives. In Chapter 1 I discussed how Maybin (2007) and Bourne (2001, 2002) highlighted the presence of different discourses and practices of literacy within schooled literacy lessons. One way of finding such discourses, used by both Maybin (2007, 2013) and Bourne (2001, 2002), was to use radio microphones.

Bourne notes that using radio microphones:

> '…convinced me that other languages and a range of unofficial discourses are also present as children work 'on-task' at their desks and tables, right there in the classroom.
>
> [Bourne 2001 p.104]

A further researcher, Ben Rampton, who studied high school students' use of language, notes that using radio microphones 'decentres' the teacher's position in the classroom and thus enables the students' actions to be interpreted as arising from their own concerns rather than just being distractions to the lesson (Rampton 2006 p.32 – 33). Thus my placing of the microphone near or on the children rather than the adults in the room enabled me to place them at the centre of what was happening, an essential aspect of researching young children's interpretations of being taught to read and write in school.

2.2.2.2 Reflexive considerations for the use of digital recording devices

Although my use of digital technologies was intended to capture children practising literacy in the 'natural' social setting of the classroom, here I highlight two reflexive considerations for my use of digital recordings in my ethnographic study. Firstly, the decisions I took about the deployment of such technologies meant that this data was subjective. Collier emphasises this point when she says of visual technologies:

> '…photographs, video and film are, ultimately, complex reflections of a relationship between maker and subject in which both play roles in shaping their character and content.'
>
> [Collier 2001 p.35]

In terms of my role, as 'maker' of digital recordings (ibid), I pointed my camera or positioned my microphone according to what I believed to be of interest in terms of my study, this means that some reflexive consideration was required of the subjectivity of using digital means of recording (Jewitt 2012). This was in part managed through my keeping of fieldnotes (see 2.2.1.4 above).

Secondly, the presence of these technologies impacted on how the children behaved. For example, the children sometimes danced for or pulled faces at the video camera or sang songs and argued about the position of the Digital Voice Recorder (DVR). Thus reflexivity was required to consider the effect of recording equipment on the data I collected (Jewitt 2012 p.9), particularly the effect it might have had on the children's literacy practices[7].

I now describe how I used firstly microphones and secondly video cameras in my research.

2.2.2.3 The use of microphones in my research

I used microphones both with and without a video camera. For video recordings there are usually two soundtracks, the first provided by the video recorder itself and the second provided by either a Bluetooth microphone (BTM) attached to a second video camera that recorded sound only, or a Digital Voice Recorder (DVR). This approach meant that clearer recordings could be made of spoken interactions between children than that provided by the video camera's microphone. The Bluetooth microphone had an additional advantage of being able to be placed around a child's neck and so could record children's interactions when they were seated on the carpet in front of the teacher or as they moved around the room.

The DVR was limited in that it could not be attached to a child and thus could only record the children's interactions as they worked at tables. I also used this device to record children without the video camera, relying on accompanying fieldnotes to deepen my understanding of the children's interactional work. However, a problem with the use of microphones without video is that quieter children could not be studied and so my research tends to focus on children who were talkative in the classroom.

[7] See Chapter 5:5.1.5 Example 8, for an example of my deliberations concerning the effect of the video camera on an instance of peer-to peer copying.

Both the Bluetooth microphone and the DVR captured these 'more talkative' children's classroom interactions. A particular advantage for my research was that they captured how the children responded to one another as individuals rather than just how they responded to the teacher as students, revealing discursive practices that were not dependent on what the teacher said or did. This enabled me to pay closer attention to young children's social practices of literacy in school.

2.2.2.4 The use of video in my research

The use of video supported my research aim to focus on young children's social practices of literacy in the social world of the classroom in a number of ways, many of which are summed up by Jewitt's (2012) description of the distinctive qualities of video data:

> 'It provides a fine-grained, multimodal record of an event detailing gaze, expression, body posture, and gesture. It is a shareable, malleable digital record in which all modes are recorded sequentially.'
>
> [Jewitt 2012 p.2]

In terms of being shareable, I could view my video data with other people. I was able to present segments of data at workshops and conferences which led to discussions and questions that offered new ways of looking at the children's literacy practices[8]. In terms of being malleable, I was able to repeatedly view the data I had collected in a number of ways. I could slow down the recording, turn the sound on or off, focus on particular sections of the screen and I could return to the observation after further reading. This supported reflexivity in that I could experiment with different ways of looking at the same phenomena. Finally, the use of video captured the multi-modal nature of literacy practices including the '…gaze, expression, body posture, and gesture…' alluded to by

[8] Unfortunately, for ethical reasons, the videos cannot be shared in the presentation of this thesis. This means that the reader is dependent on the quality of my transcriptions of video and audio data as I will discuss later in this chapter.

Jewitt (2012, above). In the case of my research it also recorded how the children took up and used the physical tools for writing as well as the resources they referred to around the classroom such as display boards and other children's work.

Furthermore, although in making recordings of the field I made decisions about where and how to place the cameras, the recording itself was less subject to personal viewpoint than fieldnotes in that it often captured more than I anticipated. Collier (2001) describes how the visual field captured when a camera is pointed at the world:

> '…usually contains a complex range of phenomena, much of which is outside our awareness as camera person or subject.'
>
> [Collier 2001 p.35]

This means the viewer of a photograph or video recording may perceive phenomena which the classroom observer and research participants may not have been aware of. This may be uncovered when watching and re-watching video footage or when sharing data with third parties, leading to new interpretations of what is happening. Such a process means that video recording can be seen as a '…tool for refining the ethnographer's attention, for monitoring and aiding the training of the eye…' (Grasseni 2004 p.16). This was particularly important in my research where I wished to move away from dominant assumptions about young children learning literacy in classrooms and explore new interpretations.

This research aim was also supported by two further uses of the camera. Firstly the camera, as with the other recording equipment, was deliberately positioned to focus on the children rather than the teacher and secondly, I was able to position the video in the classroom and move away from it. This supported the uncovering of usually covert practices, since the children seemed less concerned with being observed by the clearly visible video camera than by an adult present in the classroom (see Chapter 5:5.1.6: Example 8). I note here that the positioning of the camera to focus on the children

rather than the teacher involves the ethical consideration that it is unfair to make assumptions about the teacher's behaviour, as data on her actions are incomplete.

To summarise, I found that Participant Observation was a valuable method of collecting ethnographic data on Amber Class children's literacy practices in the social world of their classroom. My use of fieldnotes and digital technologies enabled me to examine my own assumptions, be reflexive about my research process, and focus on the literacy practices of the children rather than the adults. Later in the chapter I shall offer an account of how the data collected was analysed. For the moment I continue with my account of Wolcott's (1997) four field techniques for ethnography in education – I remind the reader these were: i) Participant Observation; ii) interviewing; iii) the use of written sources; and iv) the use of non-written sources. I now turn to interviewing, followed by a discussion of the use of written and non-written sources.

2.2.3 Interviewing

Over the year in the school I tried various forms of interviews, each producing differently useful data. These interviews were intended to support my observations and were usually aimed at eliciting (child) participants' views about what they felt was happening in the classroom. It was therefore useful for my research to define interviewing broadly, for example Wolcott (1997) describes it as:

> '…anything that the fieldworker does that intrudes upon the natural setting and is done with the conscious intent of obtaining particular information from one's subjects.'
>
> [Wolcott 1997 p.160]

I describe my use of interviewing within the above definition here in terms of i) the role of interviews in ethnographic research; ii) interviewing young children in schooled contexts; iii) the nature of questions in education and iv) the relationships developed as a result of participant observation.

2.2.3.1 The role of interviews in ethnographic research

Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) suggest that it is helpful to think of the ethnographic interview as being either pre-structured – where the questions are decided in advance and the researcher is clear about the type of information which they intend to elicit - or reflexive - where the researcher arranges to 'intrude upon the natural setting' (cf Wolcott 1997, above) but has no predetermined design, instead relying on a thorough process of analysis and interpretation to arrive at an understanding of what was said. (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007 p.117). From this perspective more traditional categorisations of interviews found in qualitative research such as 'structured' and 'semi-structured' and 'unstructured' (cf for example Arksey and Knight 1999), are of less importance than the careful reflexivity used by ethnographers when analysing their interview data (Briggs 1986; Blommaert and Jie 2010).

Over the course of my time in the field my interviews moved from 'pre structured' where I had perhaps one main question to ask or topic I wished to explore, to reflexive, where I allowed the children to talk as freely as possible about their school experience with the intention of using a reflexive process of data analysis to interpret the data produced (cf Hamersley and Atkinson 2007, above).

I note here that as well as interviews, I gained some data from unsolicited oral accounts (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007 p.99). In such cases, decisions on whether the interaction should take place, its subject matter and how it should be managed was decided by research participant(s) other than myself. An example of this is the informal discussions I had with the class teacher (2.2.1.3). Since these accounts did not involve '…intru[sion] upon the natural setting…' (Wolcott 1997 ibid) I have included them in my considerations of Participant Observation (above).

Briggs (1986) stresses that decisions about the credibility of evidence gleaned from interviews depend on careful consideration of how the social interaction of the interview

is managed by all the participants, including the interviewer (cf Briggs 1986). Blommaert and Jie (2010) advise ethnographers to consider their impact on this management as part of the data. In my research this was particularly important as young children perceive adults as having power over them (cf Holmes 1998; Mayall 2000 and 2.1.2.3 above). This 'generational issue' (Mayall 2000) requires particular consideration when researching children in schools as I shall detail here.

2.2.3.2 Interviewing young children in schooled contexts

The power imbalance between adults and children is particularly evident in the light of the way questions are traditionally used in the social context of the primary school. This can be exemplified with reference to IRE (Initiation, Response, Evaluation), a type of interaction which has been identified as firmly established in school teaching contexts (Edwards and Westgate 1994; Rampton 2006). In IRE, the teacher *Initiates* the interaction that has an expected *Response* from the student, which is then *Evaluated* by the teacher. The initiation part of this process is often in the form of a question. This meant that, in my interviews with the children, they often seemed to perceive the questions I asked as part of a teaching process and shaped their responses accordingly, making it difficult to pose direct questions. Thus, as my fieldwork developed I made less use of more formal interview techniques. Instead I used questions such as 'How was your morning?' or 'What happened there?' to open less formal discussions, relying on follow up questions drawn from the ongoing interaction to develop themes and explore issues, a process described by Wolcott (2005 p.105 – 106). In these circumstances it was often necessary to accept that sometimes the process of analysis would be more likely to reveal connections and interpretations than the method of questioning (cf Hammersley and Atkinson 2007 p.117).

This approach to interviewing was supported by the children's perception of my ongoing role in the field. As Heyl describes, ethnographic interviewing is situated within relationships established through on-going Participant Observation:

> '…the definition of ethnographic interviewing … will include those projects in which researchers have established respectful, ongoing relationships with their interviewees, including enough rapport for there to be a genuine exchange of views and enough time and openness in the interviews for the interviewees to explore purposefully with the researcher the meanings they place on events in their worlds.'
>
> [Heyl 2007 p.369]

By the second term of my time in the classroom the children were familiar with my presence and many seemed to understand that I was different from the other adults whom they encountered in their day. My questions and obvious interest in reading and writing seemed to have made my purpose in the classroom clear to several children and this meant that often children's interview responses, even to the vaguest of prompts, were relevant to my research aims. Thus, the on-going nature of the research allowed for relationships to develop between the children and myself and this impacted on how the children talked with me. This relationship developed over time, so there are differences in how it affects the earlier and later interviews. For example, in the earlier interviews the children treated me more as a teacher, later on they became less concerned about this as my different role in their classroom became apparent to them.

In summary, factors connected with interviewing young children in schooled contexts – specifically those of the traditional use of questions in schooling and power imbalances between adults and children – affected the ways in which both the children and I managed interview situations. Whilst I took steps to mitigate these issues in data collection, such as asking open questions and developing particular relationships with the children based on my researcher role in the classroom, these factors required consideration when analysing the data generated by the interviews I conducted with the children. These issues meant that I have tended to use my interview data in the context of data collected by other methods, in particular those of Participant Observation (cf Hammersley and Atkinson 2007).

I have so far discussed two of Wolcott's four field techniques for ethnography in education – Participant Observation and interviewing. These were central to my use of ethnographic approach to exploring the relationship between young children, literacy and schooling. I now turn to Wolcott's final two fieldwork techniques, the use of written and non-written sources and how these sources were collected in my research.

2.2.4 Additional sources of information – written and non-written sources

Wolcott's final two fieldwork techniques are the use of written and non-written sources. In my study these sources were data not collected as part of Participant Observation or interviewing. I list these sources here:

Written sources

- the teacher's lesson planning
- the handbook for the schools phonics scheme
- the texts the children produced in the literacy lessons I observed
- classroom displays of children's work
- organisational documents such as timetables and lists of children's groupings

This evidence was collected by a range of means such as: photographs, collecting the artefact itself, downloading digital files, and making photocopies.

Non-written sources

- school and classroom displays
- the classroom layout
- children participating in events outside the classroom (e.g. the school's carol concert)
- outfits the children wore for non-uniform days
- photographs of children's writing and reading postures
- photographs of classroom seating arrangements

Non-written sources were usually gathered through the use of photographs, although I also created some diagrams, such as the classroom layout (included in Appendix B) and the children's decisions on where to sit during school activities.

In my study these sources were collected in order to deepen my understanding of the literacy practices that I observed through Participant Observation. They were therefore not intended for detailed scrutiny in themselves, and were collected more as potential points of reference in the process of analysis.

This concludes my account of the methods I used to collect data for my study of young children's encounter with schooled literacy. I remind the reader that this study adopts a Literacy as a Social Practice (LSP) approach to understand this encounter as involving the reproduction of literacy practices. My data collection process enabled me to focus on the literacy practices young children interpretively reproduced in their encounter with schooled literacy and how such practices related to the schooled context. I now turn to a description of how I analysed the data collected in this way in order to address my research question: 'What happens when young children encounter schooled literacy?'

2.3 Analysing my ethnographic data

The micro-analytic approach I adopted in my data analysis was particularly helpful in the light of my research aim to challenge dominant assumptions about the relationship between young children, schooling and literacy by drawing on the theoretical perspectives outlined in Chapter 1. It enabled me to focus on creating careful reconstructions of the moment-by-moment unfolding of young children's classroom literacy practices and taking a reflexive approach to consider how these might be interpreted in a way that reflected the children's values, attitudes and beliefs about what they were doing, as I describe here.

2.3.1.1 The micro-analysis of digital data

The analysis of my digital data was informed by a micro-analytic approach. Rampton (2007) suggests that this approach to data analysis:

> - '…privileges participant perspectives…
> - …is suspicious of a priori theory and takes description very seriously, dwelling on particulars…
> - …emphasises open-ended immersion in the situation being investigated; it's very time consuming; it produces much more description and data than the analyst can eventually use; and in doing so, it makes room for the unpredictable'
>
> [Rampton 2007 p.2]

The first two of these features align with the broader purposes of ethnography outlined earlier in this chapter. However, the third feature outlined by Rampton, in particular the 'open ended immersion into the situation being investigated' and the making of 'room for the unpredictable' (Rampton 2007), supported my research aim of moving away from 'predictable' assumptions drawn from dominant discourses about the phenomena I was observing and allowed for the exploration of interpretations based on the theoretical frameworks outlined in Chapter 1.

Micro-analysis of digital interactional data involves '…the slow process of turn-by-turn, moment-by-moment analysis…' (Rampton 2007 p.4). This notion of 'moment-by-moment analysis' became a governing principle in how I sought to understand selected episodes captured in my data collection of what the children were doing as practiced literacy in the social context of schooling.

Such micro-analysis is used by researchers from a range of disciplines when studying ethnographic data of young children in schools. For example Lefstein (2008) used Conversation Analysis, a micro-analytic technique, in his ethnographic study of an English Primary School and Flewitt (2011) describes how her multi-modal analysis of a young child's in-school literacy practices was situated in an ethnographic study. In my

research, the use of micro-analytic techniques to study my digital data enabled me to study the children's moment-by-moment interpretive reproduction of literacy practices and how those practices were related to the particular social context of the classroom (cf Flewitt 2011 p. 307). However, whilst my research process has benefitted from the insights and experiences of researchers in fields such as multi-modality and linguistic ethnography, the original design of the project was not derived from these traditions.

I now offer an account of my data analysis, which focused on reconstructing the children's encounter with schooled literacy by placing their social practices of literacy at the centre of the enquiry. Here I describe this process in more detail in terms of: i) the role of transcription in my process of micro-analysis; ii) generating categories from my process of data-analysis; iii) the process of 'constant comparison' (Heath and Street 2008); iv) my use of the 'Transana' (Fassnacht and Woods 2002 – 2012) software package for managing digital data; v) transcription as analysis; vi) reconstructing the event from the children's perspective; and vii) making my complex data available to the reader of this thesis. I take each of these issues in turn here.

2.3.1.2 The role of transcription in my early data analysis

In the early stages of analysis, I produced rough transcriptions of the digital data I collected in my first two academic terms at the school using the 'Transana' (ibid) software (see below). This involved viewing the data generally, placing it in the context of other data collected that had relevance to it, such as the fieldnotes, interview data and written and non-written sources described above, and then working carefully through each recording.

The process of producing initial, rough transcriptions of the video and audio data was time consuming, but supported my research in several ways. The process:

- gave me a general, but thorough overview of the data;
- enabled the digital data to be searched;
- supported initial rudimentary coding from patterns and relationships noted within and between recordings;
- enabled the identification of episodes from the video and audio data that warranted further investigation.

I now discuss the last two of these in more detail in relation to my research aims.

2.3.1.3 Generating categories from the process of data analysis

Once I had identified key episodes for further analysis from my initial rudimentary transcription, I set about coding the data according to the puzzles, patterns and questions I identified. In research such as mine, that seeks to apply alternative theoretical perspectives to exploring familiar phenomena, it is helpful that an ethnographic approach to data analysis allows codings or categories to be '…generated out of the process of data analysis.' (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007 p.3). The process of ethnographic research combined with a micro-analytic approach to analysing my digital data allowed me to suspend categories arising from the dominant discourses that I was accustomed to using in my professional life (Chapter 1:1.1; 1.3.1.2; see also Chapter 3: 3.1.2.3). The process of micro-analysis (described in 2.3.1.1. above) involving a slow, moment-by-moment analysis of the children's literacy practices as they unfolded in the classroom, led to the creation of new categories to support analysis and interpretation. This enabled me to: i) relate my observations to a wider body of literature than that drawing on dominant discourses of young children, literacy and schooling; ii) take into account the unexpected; iii) re-examine my own assumptions; and iv) base any interpretations on the data I collected. In order to ensure these new categories had a sound theoretical basis, I relied on a process of 'constant comparison' (Heath and Street 2008), as I shall describe below.

2.3.1.4 The process of 'constant comparison' (Heath and Street 2008 p.34)

In order to offer plausible interpretations for my data, I applied a process of 'constant comparison'. Heath and Street (2008) describe this as the interplay between the data, the ethnographer's hunches and the literature, emphasising its importance in ethnographic research. They explain that the process of constant comparison means that the researcher constantly reviews and refines their interpretations of the data collected against a reading of existing studies. This supports the generation of categories for analysis which are rooted in theory, making them more plausible to the reader. Heath and Street assert that this is '…building an intellectual framework that defines and legitimises the topic or area of attraction for the individual researcher' (Heath and Street 2008 p.33).

During the research process, I looked at studies which either provided evidence of children in other schooled settings demonstrating behaviours similar to those I observed in my study or suggested theoretical approaches to explain what I had observed. This work enabled me to narrow the focus of my research; select appropriate data to support this focus; make decisions about appropriate methods of analysis; and to check the plausibility of my interpretations. Under these circumstances the children's literacy practices within the schooled literacy setting became more apparent. At each stage of the process I kept detailed notes, both within the 'Transana' (Fassnacht and Woods 2002 - 2012) software and in handwritten notebooks which offered a similar function to that of fieldnotes described in 2.2.1.4. (above).

2.3.1.5 My use of 'Transana' software for micro-analysing digital data

The process of coding became more refined as I engaged more closely with key episodes from the data that I had identified. Below, I include five figures which illustrate how I used the 'Transana' (ibid) software to analyse my data. Figure 2.1 is a screen capture from 'Transana' (ibid), showing how the software combined two soundtracks with a single video to allow me to transcribe literacy practices as they

unfolded in multiple modes in detail – the image in this figure has been rotated 180˚ to allow for enlargement; Figure. 2.2 offers a larger version of the transcription screen from this screen shot. Fig 2.3 shows how the digital data was initially organised by the date of its collection. Fig. 2.4 shows the initial codings I used as I transcribed my data, using the 'Transana' (ibid) 'keywords' feature that allowed me to mark particular sections of my digital recordings and Figure 2.5 shows how these codings became refined into what 'Transana' (Fassnacht and Woods 2002 -2012) terms 'collections', groups of stretches of data that suggest a particular phenomenon for further investigation:

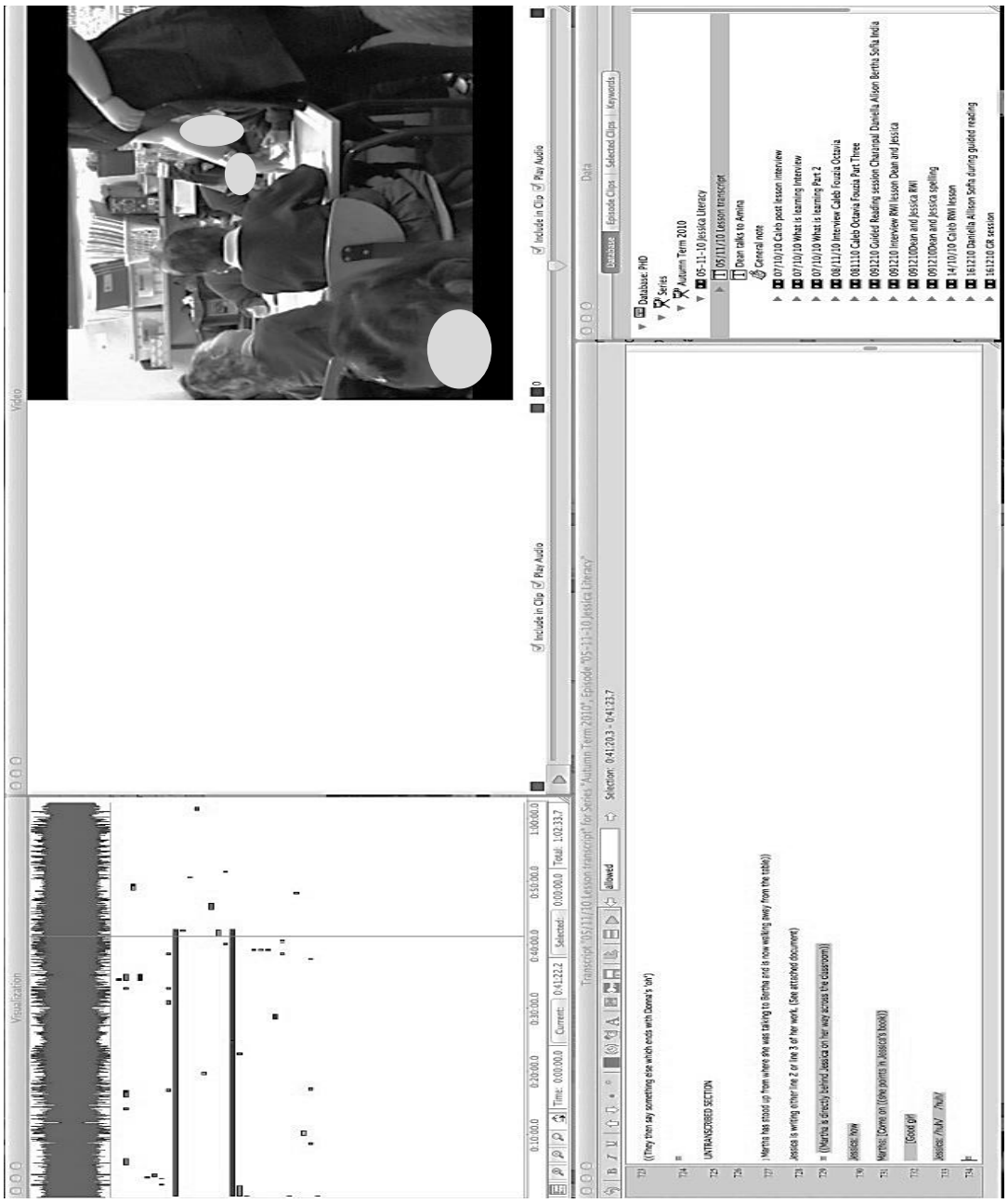


Figure 2.1: A screen shot of the 'Transana' desktop.

The screenshot has been rotated 180° to enlarge it as far as is possible. The top right of the screen shows the video under analysis. This video is accompanied by a soundtrack of the more general sound in the classroom, including some interactional data. To its left is a blank screen that represents a second soundtrack, collected using a microphone attached to a child. 'Transana' (Fassnacht and Woods 2002 – 2012) allowed me to combine both soundtracks with the video and thus privilege the children's spoken interactions. The bottom left shows the transcription produced as I worked through the video. As this picture is indistinct, a larger version of this transcription is offered in Fig. 2.2 below. The bottom right shows the various level of data management offered by 'Transana' (ibid) (see also Fig. 2.3 Fig 2.4 and 2.5 below).

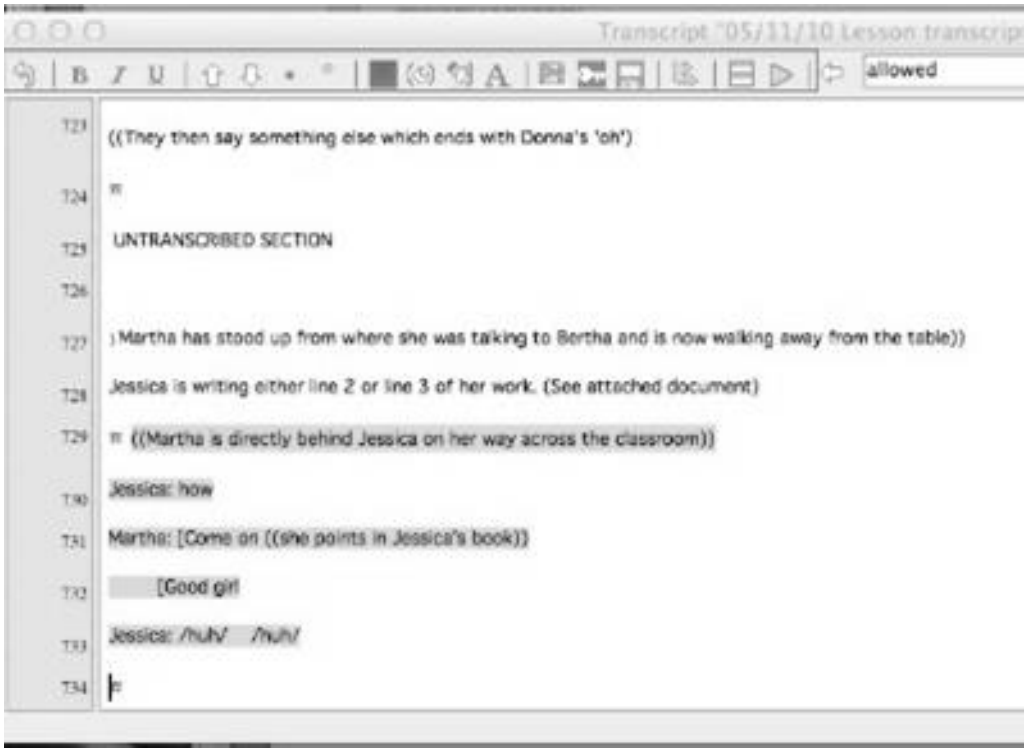


Figure 2.2: An enlarged version of the transcript in progress from Fig. 2.1.

It reads:

((They then say something that ends with Donna's oh'))

UNTRANSCRIBED SECTION

Martha has stood up from where she was talking to Bertha and is now walking away from the table))

Jessica is writing either line 2 or line 3 of her work (See attached document)

((Martha is directly behind Jessica on her way across the classroom))

Jessica: how

Martha: [Come on ((she points in Jessica's book))

[Good girl

Jessica: /huh/ /huh/

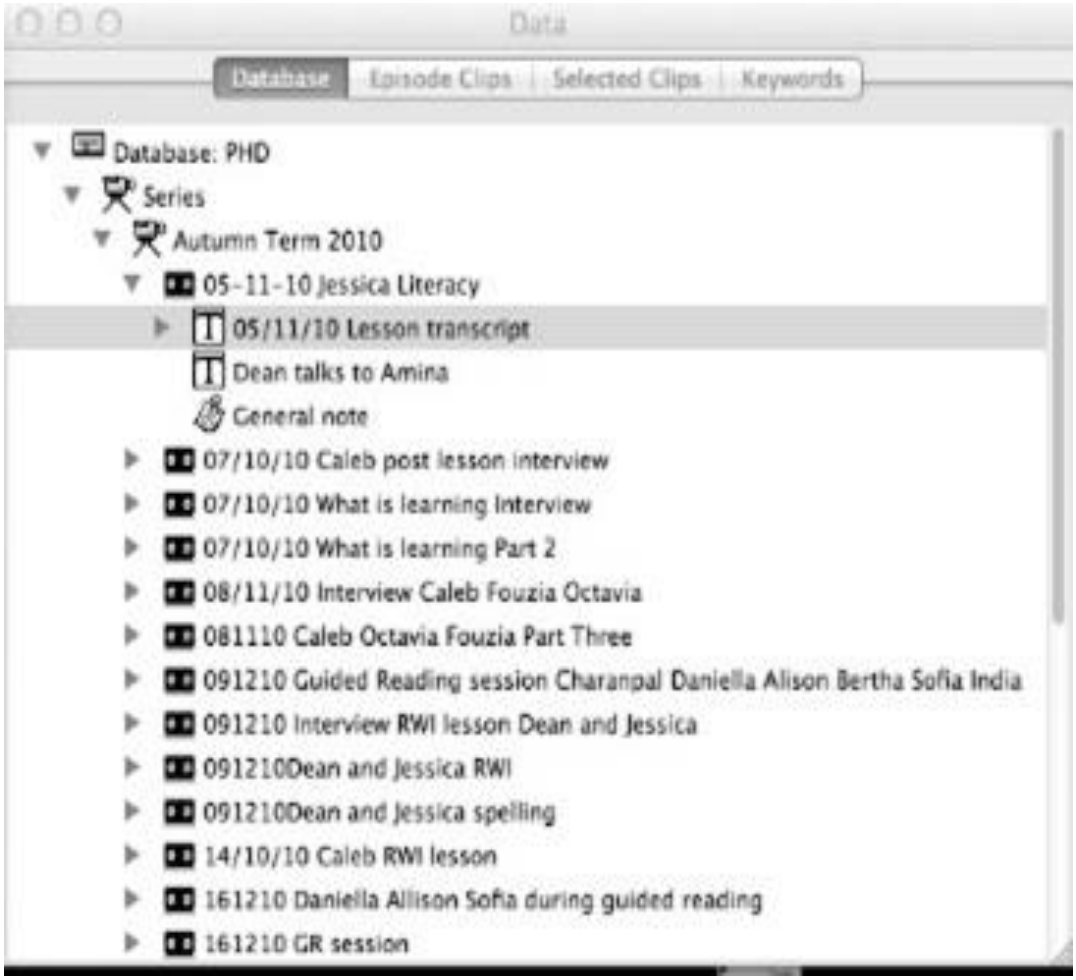


Figure 2.3 An enlarged version of the lower right hand side of the 'Transana' screenshot in Fig. 2.1 This shows the organisation of the digital data by date from the autumn term 2010

Figure 2.4 My initial codings for the data using the 'Transana' (ibid) 'keywords' feature.
These were arrived at as carried out my initial rough transcriptions of the data and supported my identification of key episodes for further analysis.

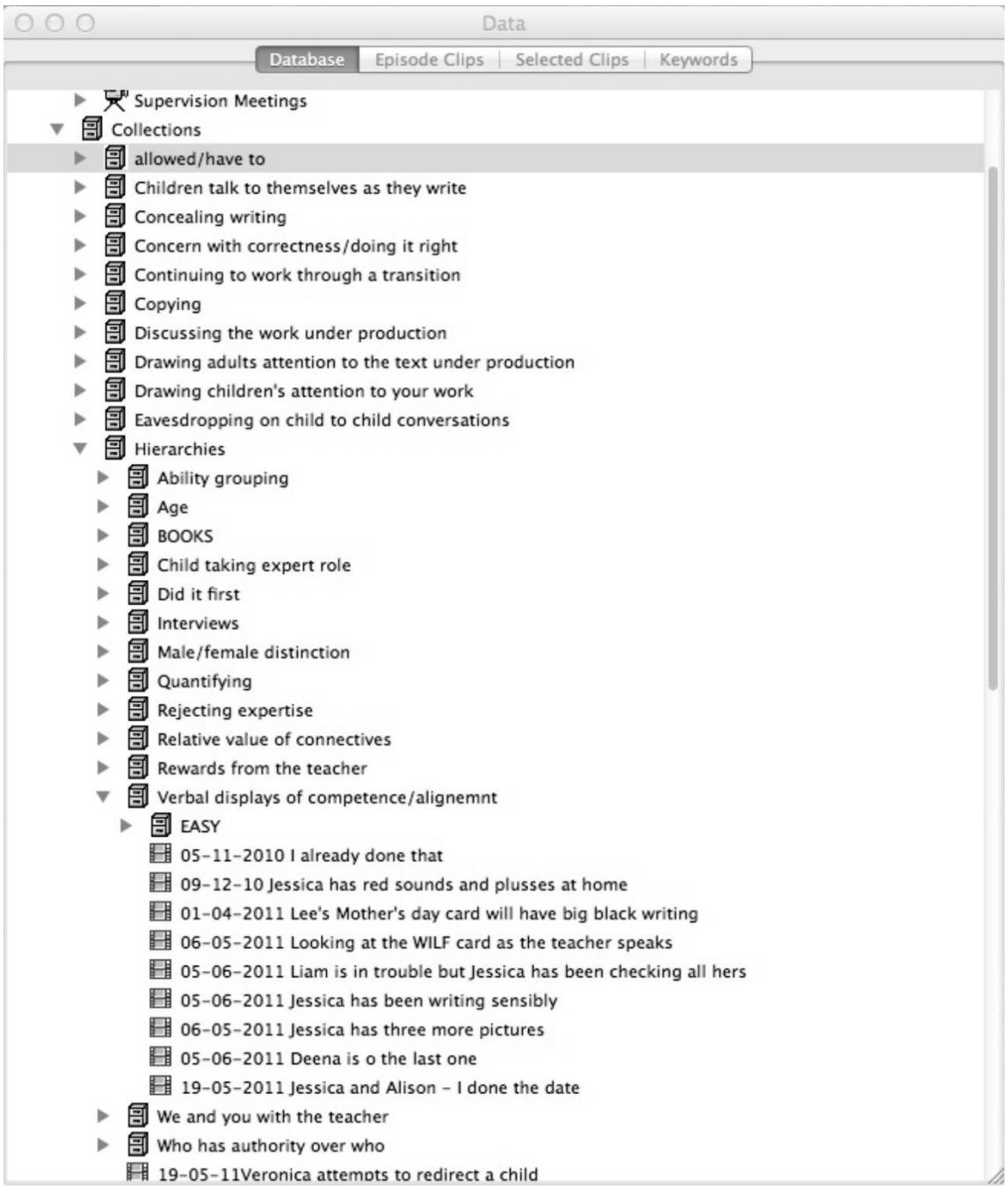


Figure 2.5 My use of 'Transana's' 'collections' feature
This enabled me to organise and classify stretches of data around themes for further analysis. In this instance I have begun with a general theme of 'hierarchies' before further subdividing the data. The outcome of my analysis of these stretches of data can be read in Chapter 7.

I note here that my aim to focus on young children's practices of literacy meant that I was interested in data where the teacher was not directly intervening in the children's work. In these cases the children were more likely to engage in peer interaction concerning what they were doing and engage literacy practices that were informed by, but not wholly derived from, those recommended by the school. My analysis therefore began from children engaged in schooled writing tasks away from the direct

intervention of adults. This means that those adults' practices are less visible than the children's in the description of my findings contained in this thesis. I now turn to a description of how I analysed such episodes.

2.3.1.6 Closer analysis of significant episodes – transcription as analysis

Once I had identified key episodes for closer attention, I worked to produce transcriptions of those episodes that incorporated data from a range of sources relevant to the event studied. This method of transcribing involved detailed, moment-by-moment analysis that supported my focus on the unfolding of the children's literacy practices. The incorporation of a range of data sources was particularly suited to my purposes as it helped me to:

> '…describe the dynamic unfolding of specific moments in time, in which the layout and modes like posture, gesture, and gaze play as much a part as the verbal.'
>
> [Norris 2004 p.65]

In addition to my digital data, I used Microsoft 'Word' (Microsoft Corporation 2011) to combine other relevant modes of data, including fieldnotes, photographs and documents as well as audio and visual recordings into narrative transcriptions of unfolding events. This allowed me to gain as full a picture as possible of the children's literacy practices. (An example of such a transcript is included in Appendix E) This also meant that my method and presentation of transcription had to be flexible in order to only incorporate what was relevant to the children's literacy practices (Mavers 2012). This flexibility supported the careful scrutiny of data through emphasising different aspects of the phenomena being studied (Mavers, ibid).

This flexibility was useful in my data analysis in two ways. Firstly it could secure a focus on different modes of interaction. For example, when analysing my data I sometimes muted the sound and transcribed only the visual aspects of children's behaviour in order to focus on gesture, gaze or larger movements around the classroom. Secondly,

I could focus on particular phenomena. For example I could observe the movement of particular physical resources round a group of children seated around a table. My transcriptions could therefore focus on different aspects of my digital recordings to build up a detailed picture of what I observed.

In summary, the process of analysis described above enabled me to engage with the observed classroom setting in a close and detailed way, destabilising both the centrality of my perspective as a researcher and the schooled literacy perspective that is so powerful in shaping dominant cultural assumptions about schooled literacy events. This is not to say that these perspectives were eradicated from the process, rather that other perspectives, such as those arising from the theoretical framework described in Chapter 1, became visible and thus available for the process of analysis.

2.3.1.7 Making complex data available to the reader

A final consideration for my analysis concerns how my data could be presented to the reader. Goodwin discusses the problems of making the complex phenomena available in video recordings accessible to the reader whilst creating accurate notation of the events. (Goodwin 2001 p.160). Although there are a number of methods available for this, including using digital technologies to present data (Harper 2008), a PhD thesis must be bound into a book under university regulations. It has therefore been necessary to consider layouts which allow for different types of data to be displayed in order that the reader can see the relationships between them.

Furthermore, ethical issues related to the Data Protection Act (1998) have meant that all participants be anonymised in the final thesis. This means that stills from videos and photographs used in the thesis must be altered to ensure that research participants cannot be recognised. These considerations have affected the way that transcriptions are offered in the thesis. However, the focus throughout has been on presenting the

aspects of the literacy practices I wish to discuss as clearly as possible to the reader. Therefore I have used a variety of means of presenting data throughout the thesis.

In the final part of this chapter I give a summary of the data set that I have worked with and the work I undertook in the field to collect it. This account includes details of how I accounted for ethnical issues in my work.

2.4 Summary of work in the field

In this last section of the chapter, I offer a summary of my work in the field including an account of how I gained access to the school and secured ethical approval; an account of my daily activities on my visits to the site and a summary of my data set.

2.4.1 Access to the school and ethical approval

I gained access to the school through my friendship with the school's head teacher and retained a contact with the school in various professional roles including student teacher mentor and consultant for the next two years. The project was outlined to the head teacher in a letter (Appendix A.2) She gave verbal consent and supported the project through dissemination of information to parents and staff and helping me secure the consent of research participants (see Appendix A.8, which offers fieldnote accounts of this support).

School staff and parents of the children participating in the project were given information (see Appendices A.3 and A.4) sheets and consent forms (see Appendices A.5, A.6 and A.7). Permission for participation in the study was sought from parents of all the children in the class, as well as some children from other classes where relevant (see Appendix A.8). The teacher was very pro-active in this, and I am grateful to her for securing permission for the majority of the class to participate. Only one child's family refused permission. As a result this child was not included in any analysed

stretches of interaction and their face was blurred out of videos and photographs used for analysis. (See Appendix A.8) Copies of all relevant documentation are included ion Appendix A.

The ethical committee (2.1.3, above) did not feel it necessary to seek approval from the children themselves. However I took steps to ensure the children's consent for participation was informed and ongoing as described above (2.1.3). In addition to this, I was introduced to the children at the beginning of the school year and my role and purpose for being in the classroom was described to them.

The data is stored securely and all names have been changed, including the name of the school. Photographs included in the thesis have been blurred.

2.4.2 Daily activities

Data collection was carried out during once-a-week visits to Amber Class, a Year 1 (5 - 6 years old) class in Oakwood Primary School in North West London in the academic year 2010 – 2011. I was guided by the school as to the appropriateness or otherwise of my visits (2.1.3, above) and so did not visit in every week of the academic year. In all, I made thirty visits to the school for the purposes of data collection, spending a total of 105 hours at the site.

Each visit to the school lasted one morning, beginning at 8.45 when the first children entered the classroom and ending at 12.00 when they went to lunch. My original research intention was to observe Amber Class' main daily literacy lesson and I ensured I was always in class for that part of the morning. However, as well as carrying out data collection, I often took groups for reading and supported maths teaching in another class as a condition of my access to the school. This meant that I was not always able to remain in Amber Class for all lessons in the morning.

Fieldnotes were made during every visit and typed up as soon as possible after leaving the research site. I made video recordings of literacy lessons at least twice a term. Audio recordings were more frequent and, after my first half term in the school these were made on every visit. Photographs and the collection of relevant documents such as copies of the children's texts were made on every visit.

2.4.3 Data set

Below is a table showing the digital data set, divided firstly into video and audio and secondly into naturally occurring and interview data (see 2.2.3, above). Some notes related to the table are included below it. After that is a list of the additional data collected including fieldnotes and written and non-written sources.

Data type	Naturally occurring / interview	Type of event	Total Quantity hrs:mins	Number of sessions	Children's groupings	Focus
Video (with additional audio soundtrack)	Naturally occurring	Literacy (writing) lessons	05:03	8 literacy (writing) lessons	Whole class lesson (teacher input to whole class then group work)	1 group of children – (DVR placed on table where they were working) or 1 child wearing microphone
Video (1 soundtrack)		Phonics (RWI) lessons	00:32	1 session	RWI set	whole set then two children at work
Video (1 soundtrack)		Literacy lesson	00:37	1 session	Whole class lesson	1 child wearing microphone
	Interview		00:38	3 sessions		3 children at each interview
Audio (DVR – 1 soundtrack)	Naturally occurring	Guided Reading (lead by researcher at class teacher's request)	01:26	5 sessions	5 – 8 children	children in groups of 5 - 8
		Phonics (RWI) lesson	00:32	2 sessions	RWI set	whole phonics group
		Spelling test	01:49	7 sessions	RWI set	DVR placed on one table
		Literacy lesson	04:45	9 sessions	various	various
		Spelling test + following literacy lesson	01:03	1 session	RWI set then whole class	various
		writing assessment lesson	00:47	1 session	whole class	whole class lesson then DVR placed on table to record group
		Miscellaneous	02:14	5 sessions	various	various
	Interview		04:31	28 sessions		between 1 and 4 children

Table 1 Digital data collected

The data set contains almost 7 hours of video recordings and some 16 hours of audio recordings. The length of interviews ranged from 25 seconds to eighteen minutes and varied in terms of the setting, number of participants and timing in the school morning. The word 'set' in the 'children's grouping' column refers to grouping of children for RWI (phonics) lessons (Chapter 3: 3.2.4.1). The term 'miscellaneous' in the last but one field in the 'type of event' column refers to events ranging from a maths lesson to an attempt

by two children to teach me Slovak and Polish. Appendix C contains a more detailed list of these recordings.

These digital recordings are accompanied by:

- **234 typed up pages of 1.5 line spaced fieldnotes** covering thirty visits to the school
- **588 photographs** of subjects such as the children at work; the children's written work; school and classroom displays; special events such as assemblies; and classroom and table layouts
- **photocopied documents** including the school's phonic scheme handbook; the children' writing frames; the texts the children produced; pages from the books the children read
- **digital documents including** the teachers' planning for literacy lessons and the writing frames the children used

2.5 Chapter Summary

A central aim of my research was to apply theoretical perspectives that challenge dominant discourses about children, literacy and schooling to a study of young children's practices of literacy in the classroom. Two of these perspectives that of Literacy as a Social Practice (LSP, Street 1984; Barton and Hamilton 1998) and Corsaro's theory of children's socialisation as a process of interpretive reproduction (Corsaro 2005, 2011), emphasise the importance of studying the everyday phenomena in the social context in which they occur. In my study, which adopts these perspectives to explore young children's literacy practices in the social context of a West London classroom in the early twenty first century, it was therefore important to observe young children's literacy practices in the context of their everyday encounter with schooling. Taking an ethnographic approach to my research supported both the theoretical perspectives I adopted in my research and my research aims.

According to the principles of an ethnographic approach, I engaged in reflexive, careful, detailed and thorough work in order to produce an account that is reliable, plausible and faithful to the participants' own experiences. Throughout the research process I have needed to be reflexive about issues including my professional familiarity with dominant discourses of children, schooling and literacy and the advantages and limitations of each method I have used for data collection. Reflexivity has also included an ongoing awareness of the ethical implications of my work. This careful and detailed research process has supported my research aims to: a) draw on the theoretical perspectives outlined in Chapter 1 that challenge dominant assumptions about the relationship between young children, schooling and literacy; b) place literacy practices at the centre of the enquiry; c) pay close attention to the social practices of literacy found in schooling; and d) focus on the relationship between the children's practices of literacy and the organisational procedures and practices of the school.

In the next chapter I begin to describe the outcomes of my research. This comprises a detailed description of the procedures and practices the school used to organise literacy teaching in Amber Class, using Foucault's description of such practices as 'disciplinary technologies' to sharpen my account of how dominant discourses of young children, schooling and literacy shape the dominant discourse of schooled literacy that the young children in my study encountered in Amber Classroom.

Chapter 3 Schooled literacy discourses and everyday classroom practices

This is the first of two chapters that focus on two sets of literacy practices that I found in my data analysis of the complex social world of Amber Classroom - those embedded in the everyday pedagogical practices of schooling - called in this thesis 'schooled literacy' - and those of the young children who encounter those practices in their everyday school lives. The current chapter focuses on the first of these. It draws on the work of Michel Foucault (1977) to denaturalise the dominant discourses of schooled literacy identified by LSP researchers (Chapter 1: 1.2.2), that have become normalised within UK schooling. It describes how these discourses are held in place by the everyday schooled practices which Foucault conceptualises as 'disciplinary technologies' that are intended to regulate and organise diverse populations in institutions of state (Chapter 1: 1.3.1). These technologies are often overlooked in research into pedagogical practices (cf Gore 1998, Dixon 2011). However, I argue that the visibility of these disciplinary technologies in young children's everyday encounter with schooled literacy means that their operation requires careful analysis in order to deepen perspectives on their effects on firstly the way young children's literacy practices are understood within the discourses of schooled literacy, and secondly how young children interpretively reproduce literacy practices in the social context of the classroom.

The chapter begins with an account of Foucault's analysis of the development of systems of mass schooling as disciplinary institutions of state (3.1.1). I describe the role of such institutions in organising and regulating diverse populations by implementing particular practices, described by Foucault as 'disciplinary technologies'. I then describe five of these technologies (3.1.2), those of: a) *normalising judgement*; b) *surveillance*, c) *the examination*, d) *seriation,* and e) *ranking*. A particular focus for this

description is *'normalising judgement'* as I argue that this technology has a critical role in normalising the dominant discourses of literacy within the institution of schooling. Following this I demonstrate how these disciplinary technologies shape the everyday practices of schooled literacy in Amber Classroom in West London (3.2). The chapter focuses on the disciplinary technologies which are visible to the young children in Amber Class as part of their encounter with schooled literacy. In the final part of the chapter (3.3) I note that it is important to understand the operation of these technologies in the contexts in which they are situated. From an LSP perspective, literacy is a social practice (LSP) which is contingent upon practitioners' interpretation of their social context. Thus, the visibility of the operation of these disciplinary technologies in the social context of Amber Classroom means that they are likely to be incorporated into young children's interpretive reproduction of in-school literacy practices. I conclude that it is therefore important to consider the effects of the operation of disciplinary technologies on young children's acquisition of literacy in schooled contexts in order to better understand the relationship between young children, schooling and literacy.

3.1 Foucault and the enactment of schooled literacy discourses in the classroom

In Chapter 1 I discussed how LSP researchers have identified a dominant discourse of literacy - in this thesis termed schooled literacy - that is strongly related to institutions of mass schooling (cf Moss 2001, Barton 2007). Within this discourse literacy is a set of 'basic skills' acquired in a particular order which can be applied to any task where engagement with written, alphabetic texts is required. In this thesis I argue that the naturalisation of this discourse means that policy makers and educators aspiring to secure high levels of literacy through systems of mass schooling draw on assumptions that are not sufficient to understand the complexity of young children's engagement with the literacy practices in the social world of the classroom. It is therefore helpful in a

study that seeks to explore young children's encounter with schooled literacy to 'denaturalise' this dominant discourse and consider its relationship with the literacy practices found in the social world of the classroom. Foucault's theorisations of disciplinary technologies support this work in this thesis. In particular, the data discussed below shows how, in the social world of Amber Classroom, disciplinary technologies organise schooled literacy curricula in ways that bring the dominant discourses of schooled literacy to act on young children's classroom literacy practices.

I now discuss how Foucault's analysis of the technologies of discipline enables an analysis of how schooled literacy is entwined with everyday classroom practices and procedures that have been embedded in systems of mass schooling since their formation in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Hassett 2006, Dixon 2011).

3.1.1 A Foucauldian analysis of institutions of mass schooling in modern states

From a Foucauldian perspective, schools, along with other institutions such as prisons and hospitals, arose with the formation of modern nation states in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Foucault characterised such institutions as 'disciplinary' in that their purpose was to order and regulate diverse populations (Foucault 1977, see also Johnson 1970 and Ball 2008). Foucault's discussion of discipline began from a close study of the prison, drawn from historical documents from the nineteenth and eighteenth centuries, however many of the points he made in his analysis are illustrated by examples from sources related to schools and hospitals. Deacon (2006) provides a helpful summary of Foucault's account of the rise of the school, drawing on the references to schooling found throughout Foucault's work. He argues that Foucault saw that it was not schooling per se that was useful in the establishment of nation states, it was a particular type of schooling that could be applied to regulating a mass

of people[9]. This point can be illustrated with reference to Cummings (2003), who draws a useful picture of commonalities between the education systems established in six nations in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries[10]. Although the purpose of Cummings' work overall is to explore differences between education systems, this outline of commonalities serves to offer a model of features which are still in place today in the English system of state education and which contributed to their attractiveness to legislators on education in the late nineteenth century. Their endurance, despite numerous changes in government and policy, makes them seem inevitable:

> '…a system of schools to educate relatively large numbers of the body public in appropriate moral precepts and severally cognitively complex subjects…and to arrange this education in a series of levels from the lowest elementary grade through intermediate grades to an advanced grade; corresponding to each grade was a class of students who were periodically tested to determine their readiness for advancement. Other commonalities included a bureaucratisation of educational personnel in charge of schools and a standardisation of education materials…'
>
> [Cummings 2003 p.15]

It is the commonalities of these systems that are of interest here, the notion of the 'arrangement', 'bureaucratisation' and 'standardisation' of education. These are the mundane everyday practices through which schools function efficiently to educate a mass of people, creating them as 'subjects' in modern nation states. This means that within schools, young children's daily experiences of literacy are enmeshed with everyday disciplinary practices, intended to 'train' them to become literate subjects (cf Dixon 2011). These practices give the literacy found in schooling distinctive features. In

[9] For an example of a schooling system that did not align with the practices of a disciplinary institution, see Gardner (1984) for a history of working class private schools of the nineteenth century. Gardner argues that these schools had distinctive aims, values and styles of organisation. He suggests that these features were one reason for their eradication after the introduction of the 1870 Education Act which secured elementary education for all children in England and Wales. Other schools, whose aims, values and styles of organisation were more in line with those of disciplinary institutions, were retained as part of the new system.

[10] The nations studied were Prussia, France, England, USA, Japan and Russia

this thesis, the work of Foucault helps us to see the effect of these practices, or 'disciplinary technologies', in shaping schooled literacy.

3.1.2 The role of disciplinary technologies in naturalising the dominant discourses of schooled literacy

I now remind the reader of the disciplinary technologies discussed in Chapter 1 (1.3) of this thesis. There, I exemplified Foucault's theorisation discussing the technologies of surveillance, normalising judgement and the examination in the same order as given in Foucault's 'Discipline and Punish' (1977) (Chapter 1: 1.3.1). Here, I begin by discussing the technology of 'normalising judgement' to describe how, within schooled literacy, particular discourses of children and literacy are naturalised. I then describe surveillance and the examination in relation to normalising judgement before adding a description of two further disciplinary techniques identified by Foucault - those of 'seriation' and 'ranking'. I argue that these technologies are clearly visible to young children in classrooms and thus have the potential to act directly upon their production of literacy practices by: i) constraining those practices to within the range of what schooling considers to be 'normal' literate behaviour for young children; and ii) forming an aspect of the social context of schooling that young children incorporate into their interpretive reproduction of literacy practices to meet the demands of schooled literacy tasks (Chapter 1:1.4).

3.1.2.1 Normalising judgement

Foucault argues that the efficient operation of disciplinary technologies in institutions depends on the identification of the 'normal' (Foucault 1977). Normalisation defines both what is considered normal and what is considered 'abnormal' – that is, behaviour that is outside the range of the 'normal'. This notion of a 'normal' provides a point, often called a 'standard', against which the diversity of human existence can be measured, allowing individuals to be organised within institutions of state such as prisons, hospitals and schools according to their relationship with what is considered 'normal'.

These institutions then work constantly to ‘correct’ the behaviour of all their inmates until it aligns with this ’normal’ (Foucault 1977 p.182 – 183). In terms of schooling, Foucault argues that the establishment of the normal in education in European countries came with the introduction of a standardised education both for children in schools and the teachers who were trained to teach them (Foucault 1977 p.184).

I argue that the ‘normal’ that disciplinary technologies of schooled literacy depend on for their efficient operation is formed from two key assumptions made within the dominant schooled literacy discourse of the relationship between young children, literacy and schooling. The first of these is an assumption that children are separate from adult society and require a staged socialisation in order to become members of that society; the second is that literacy is a set of basic skills that can be applied in any context where engagement with texts is required. I provide a brief account of each of these here, drawing on the work of authors studying children and childhood for the first, and that of LSP researchers for the second, before describing how they combine to form the dominant discourse of literacy found in schools.

Authors studying children and childhood argue that the institution of mass schooling in England in the late 19th century necessitated a reconstruction of views of children and childhood in order to normalise the idea of children spending time in school. Young children were no longer to be seen as valuable workers or wage earners for their families but as dependent, ignorant and vulnerable, requiring socialisation into the world rather than already being a part of it (Hendrick 1997). Thus, the foundation of schooling in England in the late 19th century gave rise to a discourse of children as ignorant and separated from the social world of adults. In this view the children’s present was of minor importance compared to their futures when they would enter society once they were considered ‘grown up’ (Wyness 2012). Such a view supported the organisation of school curricula to move children through stages of learning that enabled them to progress towards membership of adult society (Hendrick 1997,

Wyness 2012). In terms of the assumptions of schooled literacy, this view of children contributes to dominant schooled literacy discourse in that children are assumed to begin schooling in a state of ignorance that gradually decreases through the application of pedagogical practices that support their acquisition of literacy.

This assumption about children combines with dominant assumptions about literacy, described by LSP researchers as the 'autonomous' view of literacy (cf Street and Street 1995, Barton 2007) or the 'common view of literacy' (Papen 2016) to form the dominant discourse of the relationship between young children, schooling and literacy that compromises schooled literacy. Within schooled literacy discourse, literacy is comprised of a series of ideologically neutral, transferrable 'basic skills'. 'Normal' children can be expected to work through the acquisition of these skills in the 'normal' order and at the appointed age, regardless of their experiences of literacy beyond the school. Thus, within schools the technology of 'normalising judgement' can be applied to the disorganised mass of ignorant young children entering school each year, judging them in terms of their varied relationships with what is considered 'normal' literate behaviour at each stage of their school career. The subsequent work of the school's pedagogical practices is to bring these varied relationships with the 'normal' literate subject within the range of what is considered 'normal' as children progress towards this adult ideal.

Thus, whatever attributes each education system decides on as 'normal' when setting standards for literacy has the effect of privileging particular practices and perspectives of literacy over others (cf Heath 1983, Gregory 1997). This effect is achieved by bringing these discourses to act directly upon the inmates of institutions through the application of disciplinary technologies. Furthermore, in acting directly upon young children, these dominant discourses of literacy become visible to those children in their everyday encounters with schooling, meaning that young children incorporate their interpretations of these technologies into their interpretive reproduction of literacy

practices in the social context of the classroom (see Chapter 1: 1.4). This process is described in Chapters 5 – 7 of this thesis, however, for now, I continue with my description of these technologies, beginning with that of surveillance, then examination, seriation and finally ranking.

3.1.2.2 Surveillance

In disciplinary organisations, every inmate is placed in a field of visibility. As Foucault says:

> 'It is the fact of being constantly seen, of being always able to be seen, that maintains the disciplined individual in his subjection'
>
> [Foucalt1977 p.187]

In the school all the inmates are liable to be observed at any time, enabling their literacy practices to be constantly judged against what is considered 'normal'. As well as the ongoing observations of children, teachers' pedagogical practices are also constantly supervised, ensuring that normalised discourses of literacy are maintained in everyday teaching practices. This ongoing surveillance means that the design of the primary school and the primary classroom is such that there are no spaces where children can practice literacy privately. At all times their literate behaviour may be subjected to comparison with the 'norm'. This ongoing surveillance means that children's literacy practices in the social context of the classroom may be adapted according to what they understand the school to expect of them, thus surveillance has the potential to cause the 'norm' privileged in schooled literacy discourses to act upon young children's developing literacy practices.

3.1.2.3 The examination

The examination is described by Foucault as the combination of '…the techniques of an observing hierarchy, and those of a normalising judgement…' (Foucault 1977 p.184). The combination of these techniques brings the discourses that maintain

particular practices of literacy as 'normal' to bear directly on young children's literacy practices by constantly measuring those practices against that 'normal'. Through the examination, knowledge is generated and recorded about each child in terms of their relationship to what is considered 'normal'. In Foucault's words the examination:

> '…engages them in a mass of documents that capture and fix them.'
> [Foucault 1977 p.189]

This 'mass of documents' according to Foucault, makes it '…possible to classify, to form categories, to determine averages, to fix norms' (Foucault 1977 p.190). In terms of literacy categories can be created according to the milestones established through 'normalising judgement'. The ongoing examination of children, and the writing down and recording of the outcomes of those examinations, 'fixes' (Foucault ibid) the child in particular categories in relation to literacy as 'average' 'below average' or 'above average' in terms of their relationship to the 'norm' of literate behaviour for their age. This classification can then determine the child's distribution within the school, for example into particular teaching groups. Thus the examination causes the normalised discourse of a universal path to literacy via the acquisition of particular 'basic skills' to act directly upon children in classrooms.

3.1.2.4 Seriation

Within the institution of schooling, seriation enables a tight control to be established over each aspect of literacy instruction, thus ensuring that children's literacy acquisition remains within what is considered to be 'normal' limits. Foucault describes the imposition of 'disciplinary time' on pedagogical practice where an '…analytic pedagogy… was being formed, meticulous in detail…' This analytic pedagogy '…broke down the subject being taught into its simplest elements, it hierarchized each stage of development into small steps…' (Foucault 1977 p.159). Taking the example of learning to read, Foucault describes the advantages of such seriation as follows:

> ‘The ‘seriation’ of successive activities makes possible a whole investment of duration by power: the possibility of a detailed control and a regular intervention …in each moment of time; the possibility of categorising and therefore of using individuals according to their level in the series they are moving through; the possibility of accumulating time and activity, of rediscovering them, totalised and usable in a final result, which is the ultimate capacity of an individual.’
>
> [Foucault 1977 p.160]

Foucault describes how, within schools, the process of teaching reading could be broken into levels into which classes of children could be distributed in order to receive specific tuition. This division of literacy in time and space secures tighter control over young children’s literate behaviour, ensuring it aligns with what is considered ’normal’ literate behaviour within the school curriculum.

3.1.2.5 Ranking

In ‘Discipline and Punish Foucault talks about discipline as an ‘…art of rank’ which:

> ‘….individualises bodies by a location that does not give them a fixed position, but distributes them and circulates them in a network of relations.’
>
> [Foucault 1977 p.146]

His particular examples of ranking are drawn from schools. In the schools of modern states ranks are created for pupils. These are positions determined by factors such as their ages, the outcomes of examinations, and their behaviour in the classroom. Whilst pupils can occupy different ranks at different times, they always occupy a rank. Foucault says:

> ‘It is a perpetual movement in which individuals replace one another in a space marked off in aligned intervals.’
>
> [Foucault 1977 p.147]

Ranking therefore begins from the creation of categories that arise from the comparison of individuals to the ‘normal’ (3.1.2.3, above). A consequence of the

examination of children against schooled literacy's assumptions of 'normal' literate behaviour is to place children in particular ranks from which they can operate most efficiently to support the running of the whole institution. In the case of literacy, this is the place where they are judged to receive the most appropriate teaching. Thus everyday practices of grouping for teaching causes schooled literacy assumptions of what is 'normal' to be clearly evidenced to young children by marking them off from one another according to their relation to the normal and physically distributing them around the classroom according to this relation.

These five disciplinary technologies of normalising judgement, surveillance, the examination, seriation and ranking offer a way of explicating the ways in which dominant discourses of young children and literacy act directly on young children's literacy practices in the classroom through the mundane pedagogical practices of schooling. In this way they support work to denaturalise schooled literacy discourses and practices and open up possibilities for analysing their effects. The analysis of Amber Class schooled literacy practices in section 3.2 of this chapter (below) shows how the disciplinary technologies described above organise the literacy curriculum in Amber Classroom in ways that firstly act directly on young children's classroom literacy practices by constraining them to within the limits of what is considered 'normal'; and secondly inform the ways in which those children's classroom literacy practices are understood in relation to that 'normal' by those involved with the teaching of literacy to young children.

The following analysis (3.2, below) shows how children encounter these dominant discourses of schooled literacy in the ways in which they are: i) physically distributed around the classroom and school building; ii) set particular schooled literacy tasks to be completed within particular times in the school day; iii) grouped with particular peers for the completion of those tasks; and iv) allotted specific literacy resources to support the completion of those tasks. This analysis will also inform the discussion which follows in

Chapters 5 - 7 concerning the young children in Amber Class' interpretive reproduction of literacy practices that incorporate their interpretations of their encounter with the dominant discourses of schooled literacy in the classroom. However, for now I turn to a detailed analysis of the use of disciplinary technologies to organise the literacy curricula of English Primary Schools in the early 21st century.

3.2 Disciplinary Technologies, organisational practices and literacy teaching

I shall now describe how the disciplinary technologies Foucault described in his analysis of institutions of modern states apply to teaching of literacy in Amber Classroom in Oakwood Primary School in the early 21st Century. I begin with the uses of seriation, firstly to break literacy into timetabled components and secondly to organise literacy into a hierarchy of skills to be taught when children reach particular stages in their schooled career. Following this, I describe how surveillance and the examination are used to judge each child in Amber Class' relationship to what is considered 'normal' in schooled literacy. I then move to describe how the outcomes of these examinations are used to rank children according to judgements of their literacy 'ability'. This section of the chapter finishes with a description of the teacher's special role in schooled literacy.

3.2.1 The use of seriation to break literacy into timetabled components

In Amber Classroom the application of the disciplinary technology of seriation caused 'literacy' to be broken down into several smaller components according to the 'normalised' discourse of literacy as a set of basic, transferrable and measurable skills that could be applied to any context where engagement with texts is required (cf Street 1984, Barton 2007). The organisation of the class' timetable, the distribution of children in time and space and the texts children were offered all reflected an assumption that young children best acquire literacy by firstly being taught 'basic skills' discretely and

then applying them to tasks involving the reading or production of texts. This can be exemplified with reference to 'Developing Early Writing' (DfEE 2001), a document aimed at developing teachers' pedagogical practice in the teaching of writing to children in the early stages of schooling. The document states that:

> '…throughout Key Stage 1, children should be taught transcriptional skills…[those of spelling, handwriting and grammar]… systematically and directly to develop accuracy and speed to an automatic level. These skills cannot be reliably taught as they arise 'in context', through shared writing, because they occur too randomly and too infrequently. However they should be continually and systematically *applied* in real writing contexts to secure the skills and to teach children how to draw upon and transfer their knowledge effectively.'
>
> [DfEE 2001p.11]

The components into which literacy was divided in the class I studied reflected the components of literacy specified in statutory and non-statutory frameworks for teaching literacy such as the National Curriculum (DfEE 1999) and the Primary National Strategy Framework for Literacy (DfES 2006). Thus, in Amber Classroom, phonics, handwriting, spelling, reading and writing were given specific places in the timetable where children could receive focused instruction that was intended to secure tighter control over their literate behaviour, ensuring it aligned with what is considered 'normal' literate behaviour within the school curriculum.

I shall briefly describe each of the component parts of literacy here, drawing on my observations of teaching in Amber Classroom at Oakwood Primary School.

3.2.1.1 Phonics

The 'basic skill' of phonics received particular prominence in the seriation of literacy in Amber Classroom. In line with English policy recommendations, the school taught phonics through a 'synthetic phonics' teaching approach (cf Rose 2006, DfES 2006). This approach firstly teaches children how phonemes (sounds in spoken words) correspond to graphemes (letters in written words) in English and then how to apply

this knowledge to reading basic reading books and writing simple sentences. These phoneme/grapheme correspondences were to be taught in a specific order and the basic reading and writing books provided by the scheme were designed so the children used only the phoneme/grapheme correspondences they had been taught to complete the tasks set. The number of phonics lessons each child in Amber Class at Oakwood received varied according to their progression in this component of literacy but there were timetabled slots for the lessons between three and five days a week. The children would leave their own classroom to be taught in their group by a member of the school teaching staff, returning at the end of the session. The phonics group the children belonged to was also used to determine the list of spellings each child would receive to learn for their weekly spelling test. I shall return to this test in relation to the examination, below.

3.2.1.2 Guided Reading

'Guided Reading' sessions were timetabled daily and were aimed at teaching children to apply their phonic, as well as other decoding skills, to read basic reading books. Children were divided into reading groups of between 4 and 8 pupils for the purposes of these lessons and the teacher or another adult would teach each group whilst the rest of the class engaged in other activities. The reading books used for these sessions were graded according to perceived difficulty (see Fig.3.1, below). In these sessions reading comprehension was also taught to the group – this was aimed at helping the children follow the meaning of the text. For readers considered more advanced (usually those considered to be accurately reading each word on the page) this also included skills of inference and deduction.

3.2.1.3 Writing

Writing was usually addressed in a sequence of two lessons each week, one designed to support the children in the preparation for writing and one designed to support the children in the act of writing itself. The first lesson might comprise activities such as the

class reading a text together to get ideas, acting out stories or producing written plans. The second usually contained a session where the class composed a piece of writing together before going to tables to produce their own versions. The emphasis of these sessions was on applying the basic skills learnt elsewhere in the curriculum to the production of written texts. These lessons took place within the classroom and were delivered by the class teacher.

3.2.1.4 Handwriting

Handwriting had a special lesson three times a week where children produced lines of letters in their literacy books. The teacher would first model the desired formation of each letter - for example to produce a letter 'b' children were encouraged to write it in one movement, beginning at the top of the letter, and finishing with the loop.

'Correct' posture was important in these lessons – children were to sit up straight with both feet on the floor and hold their pencil in a particular way called the 'tripod' grip. In my data adults in the classroom instructed individual children in sitting appropriately and gently corrected those who did not. This idealised posture has been linked to Foucault's training of docile bodies. (cf Clark and Ivanic 1997, Dixon 2011) Foucault specifically refers to handwriting, arguing that the disciplined posture enforced in modern schools contributes to the production of docile bodies. (Foucault 1977 p.152).

Thus the seriation of literacy in the time and space of Amber Classroom caused the dominant discourses of schooled literacy to act directly on the children, making what the schooled considered to be 'normal' literate behaviour explicit in the everyday practices of organising the curriculum. Firstly, the prominence of 'phonics' in the class timetable, the physical movement of children in terms of their relation to their acquisition of 'phonics' and the provision of texts which privileged the application of this 'basic skill' enacted a discourse of literacy as '…based on a set of abstract competencies that allow readers to link letters to sounds' (Papen 2016 p.2). Secondly,

the seriation of ‘basic skills’ teaching where skills were either acquired separately from, or prior to their application in, texts maintained a discourse of young children as needing to acquire ‘basic skills’ before they could engage meaningfully with texts. Thirdly, the components of literacy that were allotted particular places were all related to engaging with the printed and handwritten aspects of texts. Other ways of engaging with texts, such as paying close attention to pictures, typing into a computer or understanding the relationship between different modes of representation were not allotted a discrete time for teaching, thus a discourse that ‘normal’ literate behaviour involved engagement with written words in printed texts was maintained (cf McTavish 2014; Wohlwend 2009; Larson 2006; Millard 2006). Furthermore, the division of literacy into discrete components ensured that surveillance could be more tightly focused on minutiae of each child’s engagement with literacy and the extent to which it aligned with what was considered ‘normal’ literate behaviour for children in their age group. Finally, the allotting of particular timetabled slots for literacy teaching meant that in terms of reading and writing activities, the children were envisaged as completing them in a set amount of time.

3.2.2 Seriating literacy into a hierarchy of skills to be acquired by particular ages

In Oakwood Primary School, as with the majority of primary schools in England and Wales, an assumption that all children progress along a universal path to literacy via milestones of sequential acquisition of basic skills informed the seriation of the teaching of literacy skills and knowledge from what was considered the simplest to the most difficult. This was seen in the organisation of children into year groups within the school. The children in Amber Class were aged 5 – 6 years old and were placed in Year 1 of English schooling. Legal documents such as the National Curriculum (DfEE 1999) and the Primary Framework for Literacy and Mathematics (DfES 2006) laid out particular skills and knowledge to be taught in this year group.

The schooled literacy lessons planned by the Year 1 teachers included a 'learning objective' drawn from the 'age appropriate' progression outlined in these documents, known in Amber Classroom as a 'WALT'[11]. Thus in a Year 1 class of 5 - 6 year olds, a writing lesson involving the production of a short autobiography might have a 'WALT' relating to the use of phonic skills to spell and securing sentence demarcation by capital letters and full stops; whilst the production of the same type of text in a Year 6 class of 10 – 11 year olds might have a 'WALT' relating to clearly structured paragraphs and the use of commas to mark clauses.

This division of a curriculum of literacy skills and knowledge by age meant that younger children could be limited as to the type of literacy activities they could engage with by the milestones they were assessed to have reached in the school curriculum's age-related progression. An example of this is the use of a graded system of books, colour coded from levels 1 to 12. Fig 3.1 shows these books as stored in Amber Classroom:

Figure 3.1 Banded reading books in Amber Classroom.

Above the books (left) is a typewritten sheet with the children's names. They are divided into groups according to the book band level they are judged to be able to read.

[11] WALT is an acronym for 'We Are Learning To'. At the beginning of each lesson in Oakwood Primary School, teachers were expected to tell the children what they would be learning that day – this was expressed as a 'WALT'

Books graded from Band 1[12] (the simplest) to Band 8 were available in Amber Classroom. Higher bands were available in Y2 (the next grade from Amber Class comprising children of 6 - 7 years old). According to information gleaned in an interview with three of the 5 – 6 year old children in Amber Class, all the children start from Band One and:

> '…if you get better and better when …[the class teacher]…reads with us you get better and better until you get to the last one and then you are a free reader.'
>
> [Interview with Veronica, Christopher, Jessica 01/04/2011]

To be a free reader meant that the children could choose any book they liked to read from all of those available in the school. Thus the children's choice of personal reading material from the school's book stock was dependent on assessments of progression in acquiring basic skills in literacy. The excerpt from the interview above shows that this method of hierarchically seriating texts by 'difficulty' was apparent to the children as part of their encounter with schooled literacy.

These examples show that the types of literacy practices that young children were able to engage in in Amber Classroom were restricted by the normalised understanding of literacy acquisition as a uniform progression by individual children along a pre-determined path via milestones of attainment of literacy skills and knowledge. The seriation of the curriculum and resources for teaching literacy in the school thus caused the dominant discourse of schooled literacy to act directly on the children's literacy practices by constraining their engagement with texts to what was considered 'normal' for their age.

[12] The term 'Book Band' refers to a system for grading books used in many English primary schools found in Baker, Bicker and Bodman (2007)

3.2.3 The ongoing *examination* of each child's literate behaviour

The *examination* of the children in Amber Class compared their progression along a universal path of 'basic skills' in literacy to what was considered 'normal' for children of their age. Within UK primary schools, examination is referred to as 'assessment' and surveillance is referred to as 'observation'. Below I briefly describe different practices of assessment I observed in Amber Classroom.

3.2.3.1 Formal Assessment

Phonics, writing and spelling were assessed formally in that such assessments took place through especially created events involving the setting of standardised tasks which the children had to complete.

In phonics the children were assessed at least each half term. In the assessment, children worked one to one with a trained adult to complete a set of tasks, working through a standard testing sheet. This sheet required them to read sets of grapheme/phoneme correspondences and demonstrate their skills of blending these to read and segmenting them to spell individual words. Once a child had difficulty completing the tasks the test was stopped and the score decided on. This score was recorded on a form by the examining adult and a note was made on a list of phonics groups as to where the child could be placed for further phonics instruction.

Writing was formally assessed every half term through teacher analysis of a piece of each child's written work produced under test conditions. Test conditions meant that the children were forbidden from looking at each other's work, were required to work in silence and had to draw on their own skills and knowledge rather than make use of displays, other agents or reference texts to support their work. The finished text was

analysed against an assessment sheet (DfE 2011, see Fig. 3.2, below[13]) which divided writing into eight 'Assessment Focuses' – that is, discrete components of writing such as the child's perceived ability to 'vary sentences for clarity, purpose and effect' (Assessment Focus 5, DfE 2011) and 'write imaginative, interesting and thoughtful texts' (Assessment Focus 1, ibid). Each of these assessment focuses, representing different components of writing, was divided into the National Curriculum levels. The 'expectation' for Year 1, the year group Amber Class were in, was that the children would achieve either level 1 or 2 by the end of the school year. (See Fig 3.2, below):

[13] The figure is included for illustrative purposes as it is indistinct- however a full size copy of the document is included in Appendix F.

Figure 3.2 Writing Assessment Guidelines (DfE 2011)

This is intended as an illustration only. A full size copy of the document, with a clearer text, is included in Appendix F.

Writing assessment guidelines: levels 1 and 2

Pupil name _____ Class/Group _____ Date _____

	AF5 – vary sentences for clarity, purpose and effect	AF6 – write with technical accuracy of syntax and punctuation in phrases, clauses and sentences	AF3 – organise and present whole texts effectively, sequencing and structuring information, ideas and events	AF4 – construct paragraphs and use cohesion within and between paragraphs	AF1 – write imaginative, interesting and thoughtful texts	AF2 – produce texts which are appropriate to task, reader and purpose	AF7 – select appropriate and effective vocabulary	AF8 – use correct spelling	*Handwriting and presentation*
Level 2	**In some forms of writing:** ▪ some variation in sentence openings, *e.g. not always starting with name or pronoun* ▪ mainly simple sentences with *and* used to connect clauses ▪ past and present tense generally consistent	**In some forms of writing:** ▪ clause structure mostly grammatically correct ▪ sentence demarcation with capital letters and full stops usually accurate ▪ some accurate use of question and exclamation marks, and commas in lists	**In some forms of writing:** ▪ some basic sequencing of ideas or material, *e.g. time-related words or phrases, line breaks, headings, numbers* ▪ openings and/or closings sometimes signalled	**In some forms of writing:** ▪ ideas in sections grouped by content, some linking by simple pronouns	**In some forms of writing:** ▪ mostly relevant ideas and content, sometimes repetitive or sparse ▪ some apt word choices create interest ▪ brief comments, questions about events or actions suggest viewpoint	**In some forms of writing:** ▪ some basic purpose established, *e.g. main features of story, report* ▪ some appropriate features of the given form used ▪ some attempts to adopt appropriate style	**In some forms of writing:** ▪ simple, often speech-like vocabulary conveys relevant meanings ▪ some adventurous word choices, *e.g. opportune use of new vocabulary*	**In some forms of writing:** ▪ usually correct spelling of: ○ high frequency grammatical function words ○ common single-morpheme content/lexical words ▪ likely errors: ○ inflected endings, *e.g. past tense, plurals, adverbs* ○ phonetic attempts at vowel digraphs	**In some forms of writing:** ▪ letters generally correctly shaped but inconsistencies in orientation, size and use of upper/lower case letters ▪ clear letter formation, with ascenders and descenders distinguished, generally upper and lower case letters not mixed within words
Level 1	**In some writing, usually with support:** ▪ reliance on simple phrases and clauses ▪ some sentence-like structures formed by chaining clauses together, *e.g. series of ideas joined by repeated use of 'and'*	**In some writing, usually with support:** ▪ mostly grammatically accurate clauses ▪ some awareness of use of full stops and capital letters, *e.g. beginning/end of sentence*	**In some writing, usually with support:** ▪ some formulaic phrases indicate start/end of text, *e.g. once upon a time, one day, the end* ▪ events/ideas sometimes in appropriate order, *e.g. actions listed in time sequence, items numbered*	**In some writing, usually with support:** ▪ simple connections between ideas, events, *e.g. repeated nouns, pronouns relate to main idea*	**In some writing, usually with support:** ▪ basic information and ideas conveyed through appropriate word choice, *e.g. relate to topic* ▪ some descriptive language, *e.g. colour, size, simple emotion*	**In some writing, usually with support:** ▪ some indication of basic purpose, particular form or awareness of reader, *e.g. story, label, message*	**In some writing, usually with support:** ▪ mostly simple vocabulary ▪ communicates meaning through repetition of key words	**In some writing, usually with support:** ▪ usually correct spelling of simple high-frequency words ▪ phonetically plausible attempts at words with digraphs and double letters ▪ sufficient number of recognisable words for writing to be readable, including, *e.g. use of letter names to approximate syllables and words*	**In some writing, usually with support:** ▪ most letters correctly formed and orientated ▪ spaces between words ▪ upper and lower case sometimes distinguished ▪ use of ICT, *e.g. use keyboard to type own name*
BL									
IE									

Overall assessment (tick one box only) Low 1 ☐ Secure 1 ☐ High 1 ☐ Low 2 ☐ Secure 2 ☐ High 2 ☐

If a child's text demonstrated evidence of competencies aligning with one of the statements on the assessment sheet (Fig 3.2), that statement was highlighted. The final judgement of a National Curriculum Level was based on how many of these statements were highlighted. The assessment sheet, and the piece of writing that was assessed, were retained and passed on to each one of the child's subsequent class teachers as a record of the child's writing progress as they moved on through the school.

Spelling tests, usually of a list of ten words, were carried out weekly. Children were given lists of words to learn at home depending on the phonics group they worked in. Their success in learning these words was judged by a test where the teacher would read out the words one by one to a group of children, often exemplifying them by situating them in a sentence. The children, who would be seated around the classroom in such a way that they could not see into each other's spelling books, would write these words down from memory as the teacher read them out. The tests would then be marked and the children would be given a score out of ten which would be written in the child's spelling book, as in Fig. 3.3 (below). The class teachers in Year 1 kept a bag of treats for the children that was used to reward them for high or improved test scores.

Figure 3.3 A page from a child's spelling book

The figure shows two tests taken on different dates. In the first the child scored 5 out of 10, in the second, 8 out of 10. The 'well done' added to the 8 out of 10 mark given to the script on the right signifies a greater value for the higher score.

3.2.3.2 Informal Assessment and Marking

Informal assessment took place when teachers observed the children carrying out the everyday activities of the classroom. For example, the assessment of reading of which I was aware took place through observations of the children in guided reading sessions. Records were kept on how each child engaged with the learning objectives of the session that took place in the course of everyday teaching rather than through especially created events.

Writing could also be assessed informally by the teacher marking children's finished texts. This marking of children's work is a typical feature of mass education. In Oakwood Primary School, the school's policy was that each piece of children's writing in their literacy books be marked and the pupil given feedback according to what the child had done well (a 'star') and what could be improved next time they wrote (a 'wish'). Fig. 3.4 shows an example of a marked piece of a child's work from Amber Classroom:

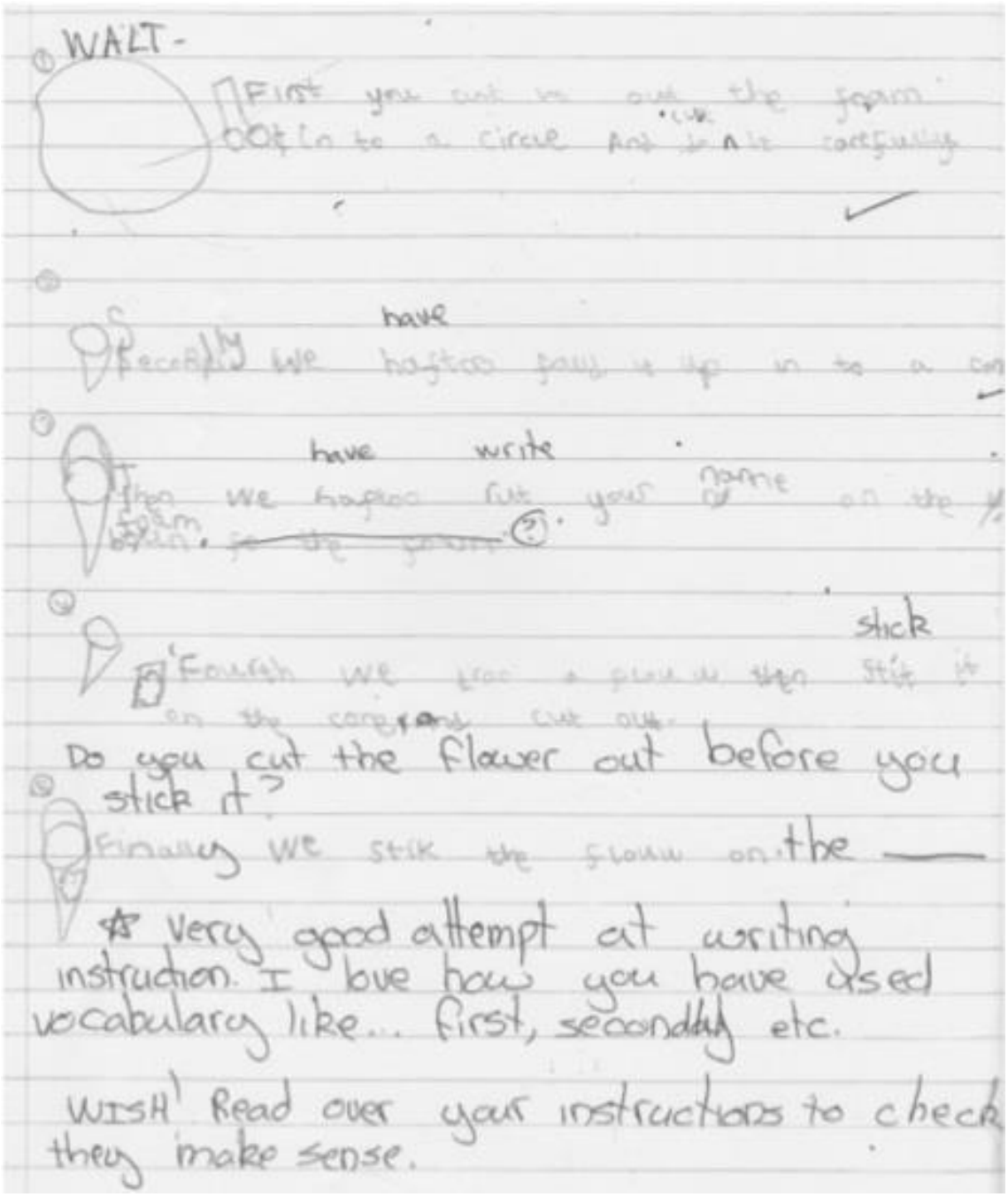


Figure 3.4 A piece of marked children's writing

A piece of child's writing showing the marking (in pen) by the teacher according to the school's 'three stars and a wish' marking policy. The teacher's marking can be clearly seen.

The *examination* caused the schooled discourse of literacy to act on the children in several ways. Firstly the addition of 'three stars and a wish' to the children's written texts and the spelling test 'treat bag' meant that children displaying literate behaviour that aligned with the school's expectations would be rewarded, supporting the normalisation of particular behaviours. This aligns with Foucault's description of

normalisation in ‘Discipline and Punish’ where systems of ‘gratification-punishment…operate…in the processes of training and correction’ (Foucault 1977 p.180). In the examples above, rewarded normalised literate behaviours included the individual engagement with texts and the application of ‘basic skills’ involving the written word. Secondly, in order to make their literacy practices available for ongoing surveillance and examination the children in Amber Class were required to practise literacy publicly. Thus the act of reading was done aloud so that the teacher could hear how the child was tackling the text and writing was organised into special books and on to worksheets which the teacher had access to for marking and verbal feedback to the child. Thirdly it enabled each child to be classified according to their relationship with a ‘norm’ of literate behaviour. This classification was visible to the children through their subsequent distribution in the school space according to their ranking in terms of this normalised behaviour.

3.2.4 Examination outcomes and the ranking of children

The outcomes of assessment were used to rank, or to use schooled terminology, ‘group’ children for the targeted teaching of skills and knowledge they were seen as needing in order to continue progressing through the levels of competence (see Fig 3.5 below):

Figure 3.5 The children sorted into groups for writing and guided reading
The children's names have been blurred. The writing groups (above) are according to the colours Green, Purple, Pink and Orange, and the reading groups (below) according to fruit names: Bananas, Mangoes, Grapes, Oranges and Pineapples. These groups were displayed on the double doors between Amber Class and the next classroom.

This grouping often affected the physical distribution of the children in the classroom. For example, the teacher could gather them into different sizes of groups for teaching ranging from the whole class to the individual. Although there were some occasions where the children were allowed to choose where they sat, their position in the classroom was most often determined by the outcomes of assessments of them within each component of literacy. I now look at grouping in the two areas of schooled literacy identified earlier. I begin with phonics and move on to a more detailed description of grouping in writing.

3.2.4.1 Phonics

In phonics grouping took place across the year group with classes being redistributed into five or six (depending on available personnel) groups and taught lessons from a point in the phonics scheme which would enable them to acquire new knowledge. The

groups which completed the scheme (which meant they had learnt all the grapheme/phoneme correspondences, successfully completed all the relevant work books and read all the relevant graded reading books) would move on to 'literacy' lessons where they were taught a wider range of skills in using texts for reading and producing texts for writing.

3.2.4.2 Writing

In writing children were grouped within their class according to the skills they were judged as having acquired and those they were judged as needing to acquire according to the progression of levels outlined in the assessment document for writing described above (see Fig. 3.2). They could be supported in progression by being offered specific resources such as work sheets to write on, having an adult work closely with them as they wrote, or having different success criteria according to their assessed needs. In writing lessons, in order to facilitate the distribution of appropriate resources or target the teaching from an adult the children often sat in their attainment groups.

The use of assessment to distribute children in writing lessons is exemplified in Fig. 3.6 below in an extract from a teachers' plan for a writing lesson carried out in November 2010:

AA: frame provided and children write about themselves and write their ambition .
I am ....and I am 5 years old. I live with my .....When I grow up I would like to be a .....because .....

A: Using the same writing frame children write about themselves and what they want to be when they grow up . Pre written with openers.

M : My name is ----
The colour of my hair is-------- and my eyes are ------.
When I grow up I would like to be a ..... because.....

BA: Writng frame provided with vocab.
2 sentences.

Figure 3.6 Extract from the teacher's lesson planning
The extract shows the distribution of children to different activities based on assessment of displays of competence.

This extract from the teacher's planning of a lesson show the notes made in the 'differentiation' column. Here, although ostensibly all the children were engaged in the same activity, in this case writing a description of themselves, that activity was differentiated by previous assessments of the child's displays of competence in writing. The letters 'AA', 'A', 'M' and 'BA' refer to where the children were perceived to be in relation to their progression against the 'National Expectations' of norms for progression described earlier. Thus 'AA" stands for 'Above Average', 'A for 'Average' and 'BA' for 'Below Average'. I have no data for what the 'M' might stand for, although it usually is taken to mean 'Middle' of 'Medium' – that is, those children considered to be between the lower and higher attainers in the class. The writing next to these letters indicates how these different groups of children should complete the writing activity and in this case this depended on the writing frame which they were given. This writing frame was a piece of paper which gave the children an outline of what they were expected to write (an example is included in Chapter 4: 4.1.3: Fig. 4.4). It could provide sentences which the children were expected to complete or structures for longer pieces of writing, giving headings for different sections which the children could then fill in. Such a frame offered the children more or less guidance and support in completing the task according to assessments of their competence.

In this way the ranking of children according to the outcomes of ongoing examinations allotted that child to a particular teaching group and a particular literacy curriculum. In doing so it established each child in relation to what was considered 'normal' literate behaviour. This ranking informed both the children's physical distribution in the school building for particular lessons and the type of resources they received to support their engagement with schooled literacy tasks. It was thus an explicit part of Amber Class children's encounter with schooled literacy.

In summary, the ethnographic data above describes the schooled practices of literacy that I found in my study of Amber Class. I have analysed these practices using the

disciplinary technologies identified by Michel Foucault (Foucault 1977) to show how they naturalise a view of literacy as a series of ideologically neutral, transferrable 'basic skills' that 'normal' children acquire as they progress along a universal path towards literacy. I have argued that firstly these practices make this dominant discourse of literacy visible to the children in Amber Class and secondly that the disciplinary technologies themselves were evident to children as part of their everyday encounter with schooled literacy in the classroom.

I now finish this description by accounting for the teacher's role in maintaining schooled literacy. This is related to Foucault's assertion that the establishment of the normal in education came with the introduction of a standardised education both for children in schools and the teachers who were trained to teach them (Foucault 1977 p.184). It was therefore important to ensure that teachers adhered to normalised discourses of schooled literacy in their day-to-day practices. In this way, whilst the class teacher is responsible for deploying the disciplinary technologies described above, her agency is constrained by the disciplinary practices described below.

3.2.5 The teacher's special role in schooled literacy

Amber Class' teacher had to fulfil certain requirements and display certain attributes that qualified her to operate the disciplinary technologies that I have described as being entwined with the pedagogical practices of teaching literacy in Amber Classroom. As a teacher in the English education system at the time I collected my data, the teacher's authority and expertise in the classroom was derived from training and qualifications gained in a UK Department of Education approved institution of teacher training. Foucault refers to the founding of teacher training institutions as being essential to establishing the 'normal' in education (Foucault 1977 p.184). Through such institutions certain discourses are produced and maintained as only those who demonstrate alignment with them can take on roles of authority in institutions of state.

At the time the data for this study was gathered the Amber Class teacher at Oakwood Primary had to have attained Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) in a British Teacher Training college or equivalent institution overseas. To attain QTS the class teacher needed to meet a set of standards of which included 'professional attributes' and 'professional skills' as well as 'professional knowledge and understanding' (TDA 2008[14]). Under 'professional knowledge and understanding' the class teacher had to '…have a secure knowledge and understanding of their subjects/curriculum areas and related pedagogy…' (standard 14 - TDA 2008 p.7). In terms of literacy, this professional knowledge was grounded in '…relevant statutory and non-statutory curricula and frameworks…' (standard 15 - TDA 2008, ibid). Such documents at the time I collected my data included, for example, the National Curriculum (DfEE 1999) and the Primary National Strategy Framework for Literacy (DfES 2006). These documents informed the seriation of literacy into component parts and hierarchical skills. Thus the process of attaining qualified teacher status in England, then as now, involved ensuring teachers maintained schooled discourses of literacy in their everyday pedagogical practices.

These discourses were further maintained by the ongoing surveillance of qualified teachers' everyday classroom practice. As discussed 3.1.2.2 (above), Foucault described surveillance as '…functioning as a network of relations from top to bottom…' in which '…supervisors… [are] …perpetually supervised…' (Foucault p.176 – 177]. Amber Class' teacher was frequently observed by members of the school's senior management team and the school as a whole was subject to regular OFSTED inspections to ensure particular 'standards' of professional practice were met.

Thus, the teacher's authority to organise the teaching of literacy in Amber Classroom was conferred according to her examined knowledge of particular policies and

[14] TDA is the 'Training and Development Agency'. In 2010 this agency was responsible for the training and development of UK school personnel.

pedagogies which defined literacy in specific ways. Processes of normalisation, discussed above, held these pedagogies and practices in place as dominant. One of these normalisation processes was the maintenance of the teacher's role as the literacy 'expert' and 'authority' in the classroom by her continued, observed and examined compliance with the policies and pedagogies found in UK government documents. (cf Ball 2003)

This is not to say that Amber Class' teacher did not make her own judgements and decisions about her pedagogical practice, rather it is to say that these judgements and decisions were restricted by the operation of the disciplinary technologies described in 3.1 (above) on her own practice. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to discuss the teacher's agency within these restrictions as I focus on the children's practices of literacy within the schooled context rather than the teacher's pedagogical practices in that context. It is important to note however that, in the same way as children may draw on different discourses of literacy in their classroom practices (Bourne 2001, 2002, Maybin 2007), so too will teachers (cf Ball 2003, Papen 2016). Thus, this thesis does not seek to underrate the agency of the teacher; it simply seeks to focus on the children's agency within these practices of schooled literacy.

In summary, when young children in England enter institutions of mass schooling they encounter a particular form of literacy, called in this thesis 'schooled literacy' (Chapter 1 1.2.2). Within schooled literacy discourse, literacy is comprised of a series of ideologically neutral, transferrable 'basic skills'. 'Normal' children follow a universal path towards literacy via milestones of acquisition of these skills by particular chronological ages, regardless of their experiences of literacy beyond the school. This powerful discourse informs the deployment of disciplinary technologies which comprise the procedures and practices that organise firstly the schooled literacy curriculum and secondly the children in relation to that curriculum.

Within schools the technology of 'normalising judgement' can be applied to the disorganised mass of ignorant young children entering school each year, judging them in terms of their position on this 'normal' path to literacy. The subsequent work of the school's pedagogical practices is to bring these varied positions on this universal path to within the range of what is considered 'normal' for children at particular stages in their school career. To achieve this, children in classrooms are placed in constant fields of surveillance within which their practices of literacy are constantly observed. These observations inform ongoing *examinations* of the children's literacy proficiency which involve comparison with their same-age peers against what is considered to be a 'normal' or 'national standard' of acquisition of 'basic skills'. The outcome of these examinations involves the ranking of young children according to their relationship with the 'norm' of literacy acquisition. Each rank of children is offered particular literacy curricula according to what the school considers can be expected of children of their age and ranking in tackling schooled literacy tasks.

The close entwinement of schooled literacy with these disciplinary technologies means that children's in-school literacy practices are constrained in particular ways in order for the technologies to operate efficiently. Here I note some particular constraints that are of interest to the analysis of young children's literacy practices that follows in Chapters 4 – 7 of this thesis. These are that i) young children's practices of literacy in schools must be carried out by individuals to secure the efficient examination of children's literacy acquisition (Chapters 5 and 6); ii) these practices must be public in order to make them available to ongoing surveillance (Chapter 7); iii) these practices should include the application of 'basic skills' taught within the schooled curriculum to engagement with written texts (Chapters 4 and 7). In addition to these constraints, which will be discussed in later chapters, children have to complete reading and writing activities in a set amount of time in order for the seriation of literacy to operate efficiently.

In the next section of this chapter, I turn to a discussion of the effects of this schooled literacy on the literacy practices of young children engaged in schooled literacy tasks.

3.3 The effects of schooled literacy

The schooled practices and procedures described above are intended to act upon the literacy practices young children interpretively reproduce (Corsaro 2005, 2011) in the classroom. In accordance with the theorisation of Literacy as a Social Practice (LSP) the literacy found in schooling takes on particular meanings that are dependent '…upon the social institution(s) in which it is embedded.' (Street 1984 p.8). Within schools, the dominant discourses of literacy form a set of values, attitudes and beliefs about literacy that inform the way educators operate the disciplinary technologies that organise and regulate diverse populations of children in institutions of mass schooling. These mundane technologies are present in Amber Classroom as part of the social world which young children encounter every day as they practice literacy in schooled contexts. From the LSP perspective that underpins this thesis, literacy is a social practice dependent on practitioners' interpretations of what would constitute successful participation in literacy activities in particular social contexts. This means that the presence of disciplinary technologies have the potential to affect the practices of literacy that young children develop in schooled contexts. This view supports Street's assertion that '…the processes whereby reading and writing are learnt are what construct the meaning of it for particular practitioners' (Street 1984 p.8).

It is therefore important for those concerned with young children's literacy acquisition in schools to understand how the dominant discourses of schooled literacy that are enacted through the application of disciplinary technologies affect firstly schooled interpretations of young children's literacy practices; and secondly the literacy practices young children develop in schools. This is of particular relevance given the widespread

dominance of the schooled practices of organising the literacy curriculum described above both within and beyond systems of mass schooling, as I shall discuss here.

3.3.1 The widespread use of disciplinary technologies in systems of mass schooling

The features of schooled literacy described in section 3.2 (above) have been consistently present as part of everyday classroom practices since the beginning of mass schooling in the UK. Whilst various pedagogical practices, values, attitudes and beliefs about literacy have come and gone in almost two hundred years of mass schooling in England, the organisational practices of schools that Foucault describes as 'disciplinary technologies' have remained in place, albeit in different forms and degrees (cf Ball 2013). In my experience of West London primary schools in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, the techniques for organising the teaching of literacy described above were strongly present in classrooms due to the effects of the implementation of the National Curriculum for England and Wales, the Primary National Strategies and the use of statutory testing for children in literacy skills at ages 4, 7 and 11 as a measure of schools' accountability. Furthermore, they are currently particularly strong due to an increased emphasis on basic skills in these tests (cf Standards and Testing Agency 2015).

Additionally, writers studying literacy from an LSP perspective argue that a distinctive feature of schooled literacy is its dominance over other views of literacy in wider society (cf Barton 2007; Papen 2016). This dominance has been termed 'the pedagogisation of literacy' (Street and Street 1995) a term that describes how the values, attitudes and beliefs of schooled literacy form a powerful discourse that has come to affect how people understand literacy in their everyday lives. Thus the discourses of literacy that are held in place by disciplinary technologies within schools come to inform how people understand literacy and schooling outside of schools.

As well as this, these features of schooled literacy are not confined to English contexts. Other authors applying the work of Foucault to studies of literacy in schooling in diverse contexts identify techniques or technologies of discipline and power in mainstream schooling similar to those I identified in Amber Classroom in West London in 2010 – 2011. Examples include elementary schooling in Australia (Luke 1992); secondary English lessons in the UK (Chouliaraki 1996); a reading intervention group in the US (Manyak 2004); and elementary literacy education in South Africa (Dixon 2011). This suggests that the disciplinary technologies described by Foucault can be seen as common across many schooled contexts. I suggest that all this means that these disciplinary technologies are often easily recognisable as a naturalised part of schooling to many people who have encountered schooled literacy in systems of mass education. This means that, if such discourses are to be effectively challenged, careful work is required to demonstrate their effects on the literacy practices young children develop in schools, as I shall do in the following chapters of this thesis. However it is important to note that the operation of these technologies across such a diverse range of contexts will not be the same in every context, as I shall discuss here.

3.3.2 The importance of studying local effects

In Foucault's own analysis, disciplinary technologies themselves are neutral and thus can be deployed by different groups, operating from different ideological standpoints (cf Foucault 1982). For example, in her study of elementary schools in South Africa, Dixon (2011) discusses disciplinary technologies positively, arguing that:

> 'The operation of disciplinary power is essential if South Africa is to create an environment of sound learning and teaching for all students.'
>
> [Dixon 2011 p.67]

However, Dixon (2011) also reminds us that the effects of discipline can be negative as well as positive; explaining that the same power technologies that she argues can build post-Apartheid South Africa (above) held Apartheid South Africa in place. Because of

the neutrality of the technologies themselves, writers applying Foucault's theorisation to institutions of mass schooling emphasise the importance of studying the deployment of disciplinary technologies in the sites in which they are deployed in order to understand their effects (cf Luke 1992 p.125 – 126; and Dixon 2011 p.164). Thus, in order to understand the effect of disciplinary technologies on classroom literacy practices I have focused my study on a specific pedagogical site – that of Amber Classroom in Oakwood Primary School.

In the following four chapters, I shall discuss two ways in which these schooled literacy discourses and practices affect the practices of literacy that young children reproduce in the social context of Amber Classroom. These are: i) the ways in which the discourses and practices of schooled literacy constrain the ways in which those concerned with young children's literacy acquisition firstly set expectations for, and secondly interpret, young children's in-school literacy practices (Chapter 4; Chapter 7); and ii) how young children's encounter with these discourses and practices of schooled literacy in their everyday in school lives affect their interpretive reproduction of literacy practices in the classroom (Chapters 5 - 7). However, I note here that, whilst Foucault's work has been useful in denaturalising these dominant discourses and practices, further theoretical perspectives are required to understand their effects on young children's literacy practices. Thus, as I shall discuss in depth in Chapter 4, I have drawn on Corsaro's theorisation of young children as engaged in active processes of 'interpretive reproduction' (Corsaro 2005, 2011) in order to explore young children's in-school literacy practices.

Conclusion

As Moss reminds us, '…through the pedagogic practices entrenched at every level of the institution, schools transform what they come into contact with' (Moss 2001 p.155). In this chapter of my thesis, the use of Foucault's theorisations has shown that one way of understanding how the pedagogical practices of schooling 'transform' literacy is by

causing the dominant discourses of schooled literacy to act on children's literacy practices. These practices, conceptualised as Foucault's 'disciplinary technologies' in this thesis, establish particular relationships between children and literacy, offering them particular literate subjectivities through ongoing examinations of their engagement with literacy tasks that constantly compare them to 'national standards' or what is considered 'normal' literate behaviour for children of their age. This ongoing examination reinforces dominant discourses of 'normal' literacy practice and marginalises others.

A useful aspect of an analysis of the everyday social practices of literacy found in schools in terms of Foucault's analysis of institutions of modern states as 'disciplinary' is that it situates such practices in the social and historical contexts in which they arose. Situating such naturalised practices in this way enables discourses and practices which are assumed to be an inevitable part of schooling to be denaturalised and made available for analysis as part of the social context in which young children encounter schooled literacy.

In the following chapters of this thesis, I shall explore the effects of these everyday schooled practices of literacy. I begin in the next chapter (Chapter 4) by discussing how such practices shape young children's encounter with schooled literacy and affect how young children's production of literacy practices in response to this encounter are understood within dominant discourses of schooling.

Chapter 4 Young children's encounter with the dominant discourses of schooled literacy

This chapter argues that the dominant discourses and practices of schooled literacy described in Chapter 3 constrain the ways in which those concerned with young children's literacy acquisition firstly set expectations for, and secondly interpret, young children's in-school literacy practices. This means that adults engaged in current practices of schooled literacy have only a partial perspective of what happens when young children encounter schooled literacy. I argue that a wider perspective is offered by drawing on theorisations of firstly Literacy as a Social Practice (LSP) (Chapter 1: 1.2) and secondly of young children's engagement with the social world as involving processes of 'interpretive reproduction' (Corsaro 2005, 2011; Chapter 1:1.4). The current chapter demonstrates that young children's acquisition and application of basic skills takes place in wider social processes than those normalised by the schooled literacy discourses and practices described in Chapter 3.

In the previous chapter (Chapter 3), I drew on Foucault's theorisation of schooling as a 'disciplinary institution' of modern nation states to describe a set of literacy practices – those of schooled literacy – that I found in my ethnographic study of Amber classroom. These practices organised the literacy curricula that Amber Class' children encountered according to the dominant discourses of young children, literacy and schooling described in Chapter 1 (1.1). In the current chapter I draw on the findings of this analysis to describe how these schooled discourses and practices create particular expectations for a second set of literacy practices that I found in Amber classroom – those of young children engaged with schooled literacy tasks. To do this, I describe a schooled literacy lesson in Amber Classroom from November 2010 where the children were required to produce a short written text (4.1). I relate this analysis specifically to one child in Amber Class – Jessica. I draw on Foucauldian terms to describe how Jessica's schooled *ranking* in relation to notions of 'normal' literacy acquisition for a

child of her age affected the schooled expectations of what she would do as she tackled the writing task set in the lesson. Such expectations form the focus of the schooled *examination* of young children's literacy practices and thus constrain what is understood to be *normal* in terms of those practices.

Following this (4.2) I present a copy of the text that Jessica produced in the lesson described in 4.1. This text deviates significantly from that expected by the adults who designed the schooled literacy lesson. I suggest that this deviation can best be understood by applying the theoretical perspectives of Literacy as a Social Practice (LSP) (Chapter 1:1.2) and Corsaro's theorisation of children's socialisation as involving processes of interpretive reproduction (Chapter 1: 1.4). This is followed in section 4.3 by an exemplification of this theoretical perspective that draws on ethnographic data related to Jessica's literacy practices in the section of the November literacy lesson during which she produced her text. This work allows me to offer a description of young children's interpretive reproduction of in-school literacy practices that informs my analysis of those practices in Chapters 5 -7 of this thesis.

4.1 Schooled expectations for young children's production of texts in literacy lessons

I begin by outlining the schooled expectations for the children's production of written texts in a writing lesson in Amber Classroom from November 2011. These expectations *normalise* the schooled literacy assumption that children's engagement with reading or producing texts involves the individual application of 'basic skills' that each child has acquired as they progress along a universal path towards literacy. Throughout the lesson, the application of particular skills, considered to constitute *normal* literate behaviour for children of the same age as those in Amber Class (age 5 – 6), was emphasised in the teaching and resources the children were offered to support firstly their engagement with the task; and secondly the way this engagement would be

examined as the children completed their texts. This analysis concerns three aspects of the schooled practices that shaped the lesson: i) the teachers' plan for the lesson; ii) the shared writing lesson in which the teacher demonstrated schooled expectations for their engagement with the task to the children; and iii) one child - Jessica's - relationship to schooled *rankings* for literacy. I shall discuss each of these in turn here.

4.1.1 Normalising expectations through the teachers' plan

The teachers' plan for the lesson offers some insights into schooled literacy's *normalised* assumptions about how Amber Class' children would engage with the task set. Part of this plan is reproduced below, copied and pasted from the teachers' original planning file. I have shaded and italicised some sections to make the following analysis clearer for the reader:

Session	Daily Learning Objectives (WALT)	Whole class shared learning, key questions, success criteria (WILF)
7 VAN GOGH	Walt : to describe myself. Wilf: children to use describing words and write what they want their ambition is.	VCOP Shared text : Vincent Van Gogh : Sunflowers and Swirly Stars. Discuss how Van Gogh lived and what he was like when he was a child. How did he look and what describing words could one use. Read till page number 7 . *Children to draw themselves in the frame provided which should be stuck in the books and the children write about themselves in their book .* Model writing on the board using punctuation .

Figure 4.1 Extract from teachers' planning for 05/11/2010 writing lesson.
NB. This plan was produced by the teaching team in Year 1.

On this plan, the second column from the left (shaded) shows the skills or knowledge Amber Class' children were expected to apply through engaging with the schooled

literacy task. This is termed the 'WALT' or 'We Are Learning To'[15]. In this case the children were envisaged as acquiring and applying skills in producing written descriptions of themselves for a third party. Beneath this, also in the shaded column, further information about schooled expectations is given under the title 'Wilf'. 'WILF' stands for 'What I'm Looking For'. In this acronym, the 'I'm' refers to the teacher and the WILF is intended to make clear to the children what she expects to see – in Foucauldian terms, what they will be *examined* for - when she reads their completed texts. In this case the children will be examined for their use of 'describing words' (that is, adjectives); as well as their ability to represent in written sentences what they 'want' (from their futures) and what their ambition is. This 'WILF' shows that, whilst the children's texts should include the drawing of a self-portrait (as shown in the description of the task italicised in the third column), success or otherwise in the task will be *examined* only on what the children include in the written portion of the text. This reflects schooled literacy's emphasis on young children's application of 'basic skills' to the production of *written* texts.

Further indications of how the children's engagement with the task set by the teacher is examined from a schooled literacy perspective are found in the teacher's demonstration of how to write this written text, part of which is described below.

4.1.2 Normalising expectations through the shared writing lesson

In the November literacy lesson, Schooled Literacy expectations for the production of the children's written texts were emphasised to the children through a 'shared writing' session. In a 'Shared Writing' session, the teacher would demonstrate the practices the children were expected to follow in the production of their texts. In Foucauldian terms, the explicit demonstration of expected practices *normalises* particular practices of literacy through setting clear expectations for what the children should do as they

[15] I remind the reader here of the footnote in Chapter 3: 3.2.2 - WALT is an acronym for 'We Are Learning To'. At the beginning of each lesson in Oakwood Primary School, teachers were expected to tell the children what they would be learning that day – this was expressed as a 'WALT.'

produce their texts. The focus of the teaching in this lesson was on the application of basic skills learnt discretely elsewhere in the curriculum. These skills were: a) the application of phonics strategies for spelling; b) the formation of spoken sentences prior to writing to ensure those sentences 'made sense'; and c) the use of capital letters and full stops to indicate the beginning and end of written sentences. The teacher demonstrated the application of these skills by producing a large version of the text the children would be expected to write as the class of children watched (see Fig.4.2 below):

Figure 4.2 Amber Class and their teacher during 'shared writing'.
The feet of the teacher's self-portrait can just be seen in the shared text in the upper right hand corner of the photograph. Here, the teacher is writing the first sentence as the children watch (lines ((6)-(7)) in Data Transcription 4.1 below).

In this case, the teacher began by drawing a self-portrait, as the children would be expected to in their own texts. She did not indicate any particular expectations for the drawing, save that it be done before the writing. She then showed the children how to produce written sentences. As she wrote she explicitly demonstrated the expectations for the skills the children were expected to apply in their completion of these sentences.

Below is an example of the interaction the teacher engaged in with the children as she produced the shared text. For clarity, I note that when a letter is represented between two slashes, as in /a/ and /m/ at line (6) (Data Transcription 4.1, below) the speaker is pronouncing a phoneme or letter sound:

```
1   Teacher:    I want to know who you are so what can you
2               [say
3   Lee:        [I am Lee
4   Teacher:    Brilliant
5               so you can say
6               ((writes on shared text)) I /a/ /m/=
7   Jessica:                                    = /l/ Lee
```

Data Transcription 4:1 Video Recording 05/11/2010

From lines ((1) - (2)) the teacher emphasised the expected content of the texts – the children should write 'who you are' (1). She called on individual members of the class to demonstrate what could be written ((1) - (2)) and Lee provided a sentence 'I am Lee' at (3), which the teacher rewarded with praise at (4), showing the children that this was the type of sentence they were expected to produce. She then demonstrated writing this sentence by breaking words down into individual sounds and matching those sounds to written letters (6). This is the 'phonic' method of spelling. The children were expected to join in with this process as Jessica did at (7).

This data shows how the teacher's production of the shared text drew on the schooled discourse of literacy as a set of basic skills, learnt discretely in a particular order which are applied by individuals to the production of written texts. Firstly, the production of the writing was accorded greater emphasis than that of the picture. Secondly the teacher called on individual children to orally supply sentences for writing; and thirdly spelling problems the children might encounter were addressed through the application of phonic skills and knowledge learnt in discrete phonics lesson elsewhere in Amber

Class' timetable (Chapter 3: 3.2.1.1). I note here that the emphasis on the use of this phonic method for the children in Amber Class reflects the hierarchical seriation (see Chapter 3: 3.2.2) of literacy 'basic skills'. Children in Year 1 at the time I collected my data were expected to '…spell new words using phonics as the prime approach…' (DfES 2006 p.50). It was not until the following school year (Year 2, age 6 – 7) they could be expected to, and thus be examined for '…drawing on word recognition and knowledge of word structure, and spelling patterns…' (DfES 2006 p.50). The completed text was left on display in the classroom. It illustrates what the children were expected to write during the lesson (Fig. 4.3, below):

Figure 4.3 The shared writing the children produced with their teacher
The children's texts should be modelled on this one, including a self-portrait and the child's name in a sentence reading 'My name is…' or 'I am…'

In this literacy lesson, the schooled literacy examination of the texts that Amber Class children produced would focus on their production of a written text similar to the one above. The shared writing session emphasised that success in participating in this

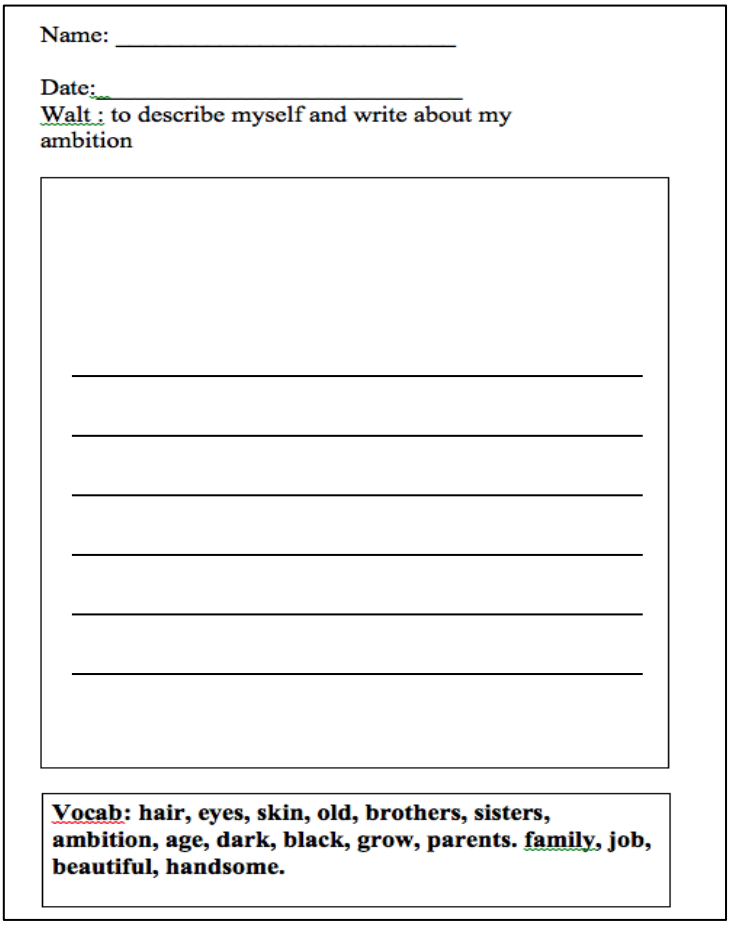
literacy lesson would involve the application of ‘basic skills’ in text production, in this case, composing simple sentences and spelling using phonics. Although not included in the transcribed excerpt above, the teacher also emphasised the use of full stops to indicate the end of sentences. The emphasis on these elements of text production normalised the dominant discourse of literacy as a set of basic skills that are applied to any activity where engagement with texts is required.

I note here that ‘Shared Writing’ involves the joint production of a text by both the teacher and the children in the class, which may have some bearing on the literacy practices of Jessica that I describe later in this chapter. However, within the discourse of schooled literacy, such joint writing was viewed as a teaching strategy aimed at showing children how to apply ‘basic skills’ in their individual production of texts rather than as an integral part of text production. Thus, in the same way that the children in this lesson were required to draw a picture which was not valued within the schooled literacy examination of the completed text, the children in Amber Class were encouraged to produce texts by assisting the teacher in shared writing, but only their individual application of basic skills was valued, and therefore normalised, within the schooled literacy examination of their participation in the task.

4.1.3 Jessica’s relationship to schooled rankings for literacy

Schooled Literacy expectations for the production of the children’s written texts were also evident in the provision of resources to particular rankings or groupings of children in the lesson. Jessica was ranked as ‘average’ in her acquisition of writing competencies for her age in comparison to other Year 1 (aged 5 – 6) children in English primary schools. She was therefore seated at a specific table in the classroom with five other children. Whilst this group did not receive direct intervention from the teacher through her continued presence at their table, they did receive support in the form of a document on which they would write (Fig 4.4, below). This document, called a ‘writing frame’ within schooled literacy practices, provides evidence of the ‘basic skills’

that Jessica and other children in her schooled *ranking* were expected to apply in the production of their texts:


Name: _____

Date:_____

Walt : to describe myself and write about my ambition

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Vocab: hair, eyes, skin, old, brothers, sisters, ambition, age, dark, black, grow, parents. family, job, beautiful, handsome.

Figure 4.4 The 'writing frame' for children ranked as 'average' in terms of their writing competency.

The provision of this writing frame was intended to enable the children of Jessica's group or *rank* to focus only on particular elements of text production considered relevant to their stage in the acquisition of 'basic skills' in writing. In this case, these were: a) the production of simple sentences; and b) the application of phonics as the 'prime approach' to spelling unfamiliar words (cf DfES 2006)[16]. To support this focus, the children were not required to make decisions about the layout of the text, thus lines and spaces were provided indicating where the picture and the writing should go. Furthermore they were not required to think of what was considered to be 'advanced'

[16] In the revision of the English and Welsh 'Primary National Strategy' Framework (DfES 2006) for teaching literacy, phonics was given primacy in the teaching of both reading and spelling. The children in Year 1 (ages 5 - 6) were to be taught to: 'Apply phonic knowledge and skills as the prime approach to reading and spelling unfamiliar words that are not completely decodable' [DfES 2006 p.48]

vocabulary themselves, so a list of words comprising suggestions for vocabulary to use was provided at the bottom of the table. Children *ranked* differently in terms of their relationship to 'norms' of basic skills progression were offered alternative writing frames; for example, the 'Above Average' group were expected to manage the text layout themselves and to have a wide enough vocabulary not to require a list of suggested words.

In summary, the evidence above illustrates the focus of the schooled literacy *examination* of Amber Class children's engagement with a schooled literacy lesson in November 2010. This focus *normalises* a schooled discourse of literacy where young children acquire basic skills through the intervention of teachers and then apply these skills to the production of written texts. I have focused specifically on the schooled expectations for the children, like Jessica, *ranked* as 'average' in their acquisition of 'basic skills' in literacy. Within the dominant discourses of schooled literacy, these children could be expected to:

- Individually produce a text that describes themselves, their appearance and their ambition to the teacher. That text will include a self-portrait, but this will not form part of the examination.

- This text should be written in sentences that 'make sense', each beginning with a capital letter and ending with a full stop. These sentences should be spoken out loud prior to writing.

- Phonic knowledge should be applied to spelling 'unfamiliar' words – that is those words that the children cannot spell 'accurately' from memory.

- The text should follow the model offered by the teacher and information offered should correspond to that suggested by the teacher.

At the end of the lesson the children would give their books to the teacher who would examine the children's texts against the above expectations.

The next section of the chapter begins with a copy of the text Jessica produced in the first nine minutes of her engagement with the literacy task described above. Whilst this text meets the expectations outlined above in some respects, it differs in a significant detail. I argue that such differences cannot be sufficiently accounted for in the dominant discourses of schooled literacy that inform schooled expectations for Jessica's text production. I then suggest that understanding Jessica's text production to involve the interpretive reproduction (Corsaro 2005, 2011) of literacy practices offers a much fuller perspective on what she does as she participates in schooled literacy tasks.

4.2 The limitations of the dominant discourses of schooled literacy

In this section of the chapter I argue that the schooled expectations for Jessica's engagement with schooled literacy tasks described in 4.1.3 (above) offer only a limited view of what Jessica did as she engaged with the task described in section 4.1 (above). I begin with a copy of the written text Jessica produced in the first nine minutes of children's writing time following the shared writing lesson described above. I note that, whilst this written text reflects to some extent the schooled expectations for Jessica's engagement with the task outlined in 4.1.3 it differs from the schooled expectations in terms of the content of Jessica's sentence. In this thesis, such differences are seen as evidence of processes of young children's interpretive reproduction of literacy practices. Therefore, in this section of the chapter I remind the reader of the main features of the perspectives of firstly Literacy as a Social Practice (LSP) (see Chapter 1: 1.2): and secondly young children's socialisation into a society's cultural practices as 'interpretive reproduction' (Corsaro 2005, 2011; Chapter 1: 1.4). I explain how these perspectives offer a less limited view of young children's

engagement with schooled literacy tasks than that normalised through the schooled practices described above.

4.2.1 Jessica's reproduction of the schooled literacy task

Fig. 4.5 (below) comprises a copy of the text Jessica produced in the nine minutes of the literacy lesson following the shared writing sessions described in 4.1.2, above. I have altered the text slightly to cover the teacher's subsequent annotations and omit the additions Jessica made later in the lesson. This is to focus the reader's attention on Jessica's text production in the first few minutes of 'independent writing'.

This reproduction is accompanied by a smaller version of Fig 4.3 (above) so that the reader can compare Jessica's text with that produced by the class in shared writing:

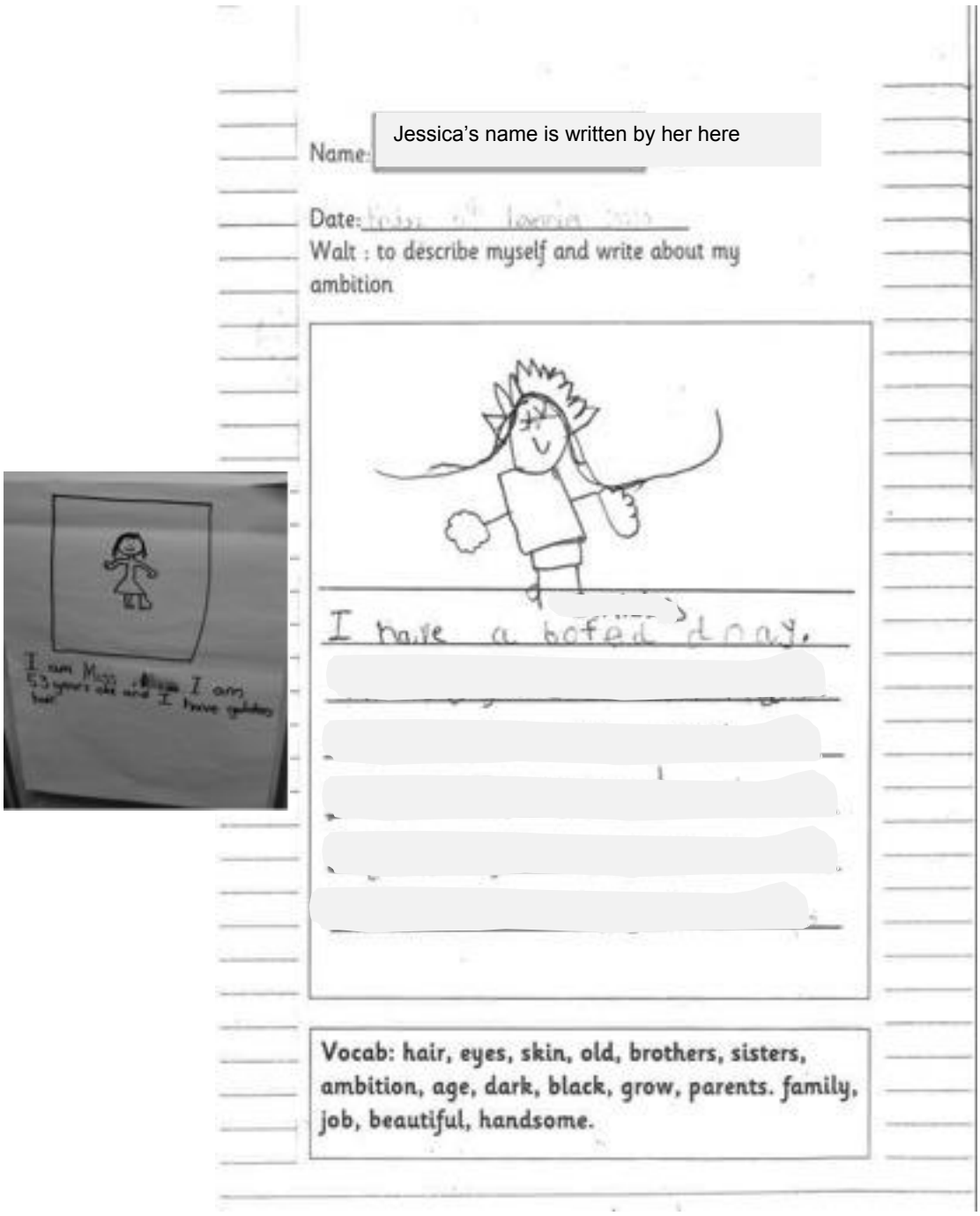


Figure 4.5 Jessica's text after nine minutes of independent writing
The sentence under the picture reads 'I have a boyfed, doay' which would be written in Standard English as 'I have a boyfriend Donte,' 'Donte' being the boyfriend's name.

Jessica's text meets the schooled expectations for the writing task (see 4.1.3, above) in several ways: i) the layout matches that of the shared text the teacher produced with Amber Class (inset photograph Fig. 4.5) in terms of the relationship between the positioning and size of the drawn and written parts; ii) Jessica's writing is contained in the form of a sentence that 'makes sense' – 'I have a boyfriend Donte'; iii) the sentence

begins with a capital 'I' and ends with a full stop; iv) the spellings both of 'boyfriend – 'bofed' –, and the boyfriend's name Donte - doay – have been produced at least in part through the application of phonic skills and knowledge (see 4.3.6 below) according to Jessica's London accent[17].

However the text also differs from the schooled expectations for the writing task in terms of the sentence Jessica has written. In composing her sentence, Jessica was expected to follow the model provided by the teacher. At several points during the lesson the teacher had emphasised that the first sentence the children produced should tell the reader their name contained in a sentence beginning 'My name is…' or 'I am….'. Despite this emphasis, Jessica adapted the task to offer a snippet of personal information, telling the teacher that she had a boyfriend called 'Donte'. From the perspective of schooled literacy, this deviation from the expected sentence could be viewed as a straightforward misunderstanding of the task set. However, I believe that a more helpful perspective on such deviations from school expectations is to understand Jessica's participation in the schooled literacy task as being part of a wider social process in which Jessica creatively adapted the task in hand to offer her reader an insight into an important aspect of her personal world. Here, I describe how I view these wider social processes as involving the 'interpretive reproduction' (Corsaro 2005, 2011) of literacy practices. Following this, in section 4.3 of this chapter, I apply this perspective to an analysis of my ethnographic data concerning Jessica's production of the text in Fig.4.5 (above). I argue that this analysis offers a less limited view of what young children do when they encounter schooled literacy than that normalised through the schooled practices described above.

[17] Gunther Kress notes that, for young spellers, accurate transcription using a phonic method of spelling is not the same a producing a 'correct' or Standard English spelling. [Kress 2000 p.197]. In this case the boyfriend's name – 'Donte' has been pronounced with a glottal stop representing the /t/ (cf Hughes, Trudgill and Watt 2013 p.75)

4.2.2 Features of the interpretive reproduction of literacy practices

A full description of both Literacy as a Social Practice (LSP), and interpretive reproduction, are given in Chapter 1 of this thesis (Chapter 1: 1.2 and 1.4 respectively). However in order to support the analysis in section 4.3 of this chapter (below) I briefly remind the reader that, from an LSP perspective, the acquisition and application of 'basic skills' which form the schooled expectation of Jessica's engagement with the schooled literacy task (see 4.1.3, above) are part of a wider social process of literacy practices. Such practices are contingent upon people's values, attitudes and beliefs about what they are doing as they engage with texts in their current social context. In this case the person engaging with a text is Jessica, a five-year-old child. For this reason, I argue that Jessica's literacy practices involve interpretive reproduction (Corsaro 2005, 2011). This means that the social processes involved in her reproduction of literacy practices include her active appropriation of aspects of her social world which she creatively adapts in order to manage her current concerns and priorities. Furthermore, the interpretive reproduction of such practices is understood to involve the sharing of such routines within children's peer cultures (cf Evaldsson and Corsaro 1998), thus Jessica's literacy practices may be shared with other children practising literacy in the social context of Amber Classroom.

In this thesis it is useful to understand young children as *reproducing* literacy practices. This allows for the continuity of young children's literacy practices with the practices promoted within schooled literacy. For example, Jessica's text in Fig. 4.5 (above) meets schooled expectations for her engagement with the writing task in several respects, such as her use of a full stop and capital letter to demarcate her sentence. This accords with evidence throughout my ethnographic data of Amber Class' children reproducing the literacy practices emphasised within schooled literacy expectations such as those outlined in 4.1.3 (above). However, there are moments in my data when they reinterpret and reformulate these practices in ways that are contingent on their interpretations of the social context of the classroom. Such a moment, captured in Fig.

4.5, is Jessica's deviation from the schooled expectation that she begin her written text with a sentence telling the reader her name in order to write about her 'boyfriend', Donte.

I argue that the dominant discourses of schooled literacy that inform the schooled expectations of the literacy task described in 4.1 (above) limit perspectives on such moments to notions of 'misunderstandings' or 'misconceptions' on the part of the children. However the evidence of the analysis below (4.3), of Jessica's literacy practices as she produced her text (Fig. 4.5) demonstrate that this limited perspective misses much of what happened when Jessica engaged with the schooled literacy task.

In the section which follows (4.3), I illustrate key features of young children's interpretive reproduction of literacy practices through my analysis of ethnographic data related to Jessica's engagement with the schooled literacy task described in 4.1 (above). Such an analysis allows for young children's acquisition and application of basic skills to be repositioned as part of literacy practices that are contingent upon those children's interpretations of the priorities of the social context of the classroom. I argue that this allows for more of those literacy practices to be seen and thus made available for interpretation than allowed for in the current dominant discourses of schooled literacy.

4.3 Jessica's interpretive reproduction of literacy practices

I now draw an analysis of ethnographic data relating to Jessica's production of her sentence in Amber Classroom in order to show how Corsaro's theorisation of 'interpretive reproduction' (Corsaro 2005, 2011) can be used to reposition schooled expectations for young children's engagement with schooled literacy tasks within a wider LSP perspective of literacy as a context embedded social practice. To do this, I analyse video and audio recordings of Jessica engaged in the production of the written

text reproduced in Fig. 4.5 (above). This analysis is organised into a description of the following features of Jessica's interpretive reproduction of literacy practices: i) Jessica attaches value to the different modes of the schooled literacy task; ii) Jessica appropriates and adapts the schooled task to meet her current social priorities; iii) social interaction is integral to Jessica's literacy practices; iv) aspects of Jessica's literacy practices are shared within Amber Class' peer culture; and v) the interpretive reproduction of 'basic skills'. This last part of the description is divided into two parts, the first on Jessica's composition of her sentence, the second on her process of using phonics to spell.

I remind the reader that during Jessica's engagement with this task she was seated at a table with five other children ranked as 'average' in relation to what was considered 'normal' in the acquisition of literacy for children of their age. Below is a diagram (Fig 4.6) of the seating arrangement around the table, offered to support the reader's understanding of the analysis that follows:

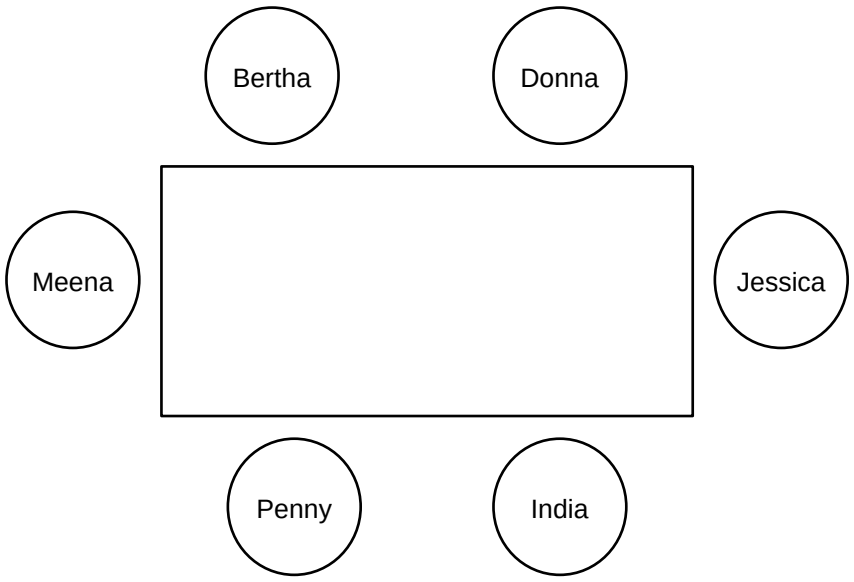


Figure 4.6 The seating arrangement around Jessica's table.

I now analyse Jessica's participation in the schooled literacy task from a perspective of the interpretive reproduction (Corsaro 2005, 2011) of literacy practices.

4.3.1 Jessica attaches value to different modes of the schooled literacy task

A LSP perspective emphasises that values, beliefs and attitudes are integral to literacy practices (Street 1984, Barton and Hamilton 1998). Above I illustrated how, within the practices of schooled literacy, the printed or written text is given greater value than drawing (4.1.1). However Jessica's practice of literacy when completing her school assigned text suggests she valued her drawing at least as much as her written text. This is evidenced in the stretch of interaction below, which took place between Jessica and the child seated on her right, Donna, as Jessica completed her drawing:

```
1     Jessica:  ((commenting on her drawing)) (Ye::ah) Ha Ha ((laughs))
2               I did a (boxer right hand)
3               ((Jessica's remarks do not appear to be directed at
4               anyone in particular.))
5     Jessica:  My one's got a skirt and a top
6     Donna:    Mine just has a top ((Neither girl looks up from their
7               work))
8               ((Donna sits up))
9     Jessica:  I can't draw hands ((Looks up at Donna))
10              ((Donna looks at Jessica's work and glances at Jessica,
11              then bends forward over her own work again))
12    Jessica:   ((Looks down at her own work again)) I can't draw
13              hands you know
14              ((Looks around the table)) Meena, Meena ((to child at
15              far end of table))
16              I can't draw hands.
```

Data Transcription 4:2 Video/audio recording literacy lesson 05/11/2010

The process of drawing was of some amusement to Jessica, particularly her self-perceived lack of competence at drawing hands. At lines (1) and (2), she laughed at the picture she was drawing, and she repeated that she 'can't draw hands' several times (9, 12 -16). Jessica and Donna engaged in interaction about their drawings ((5) – (11)) and Jessica was keen to involve the other children at her table in the discussion, for example calling out to Meena ((14) – (16)). Jessica thus placed value on producing her drawing, deriving pleasure from the process, attempting to involve others,

commenting on her own competency at the task and discussing its content. These social interactions suggest that, whilst schooled practices valued the production of the written sentence, the drawing of the picture was valued in Jessica's literacy practices.

The value Jessica attached to the picture as an important part of her text aligns with the research of authors studying literacy as a multimodal phenomenon. In particular, Gunther Kress expands the term literacy beyond the notion of a written text utilising an alphabetic code to understand it as related to a wide range of modes such as visual, linguistic or kinaesthetic (see Kress 1997; Kress et al 2005). This understanding of literacy as related to multimodal communication informs many studies of children's engagement with texts. For example, Wohlwend (2009) discusses how young children are often 'early adopters' of new literacies and technologies at home which draw on a wider range of modes than the printed word. Thus, whilst the schooled *examination* of Jessica's text focuses on the written portion only (4.1.3 above, see also Hassett 2006) Jessica's value for her picture aligns with a broader discourse of literacy as multimodal. This goes beyond the dominant discourse of literacy as being concerned with the printed or written word only.

4.3.2 Jessica appropriates and adapts the schooled literacy task to meet her current social priorities

Above I argued that taking an LSP approach to analysing Jessica's literacy practices allows her values, beliefs and attitudes about what she was doing as she practised literacy in the social context of Amber Classroom to be included in the analysis. Adding a perspective of children's socialisation as 'interpretive reproduction' (Corsaro 2005, 2011) supports a close examination of how Jessica appropriated and adapted features of that social context to reproduce literacy practices that met what she considered to be the priorities of her social world. This process of interpretive reproduction could be seen when Jessica wrote the sentence 'I have a boyfriend – Donte', instead of telling the teacher her name in a sentence containing the words 'My name is…' or 'I am…' as

expected within the schooled literacy task. This deviation from expectations demonstrates how Jessica appropriated and creatively adapted the schooled task to address a topic that was of current interest within Amber Class' children's classroom peer culture. I briefly describe how this topic came to be addressed in Jessica's text here.

Boyfriends and girlfriends were an important aspect of the peer culture in Amber Classroom and discussions on this topic frequently occurred. In this particular November literacy lesson the topic had arisen during the shared writing part of the lesson described earlier in this chapter (4.1.2, above), when one child, Lee, made the illicit suggestion that the teacher write that she (the teacher) had a boyfriend. This suggestion was not acknowledged by the teacher as part of the official schooled lesson, but the amusement it caused to the children meant that the teacher had to intervene to draw their attention back to the shared 'schooled' writing. During Jessica's process of text production she returned to the topic once more, beginning a giggly conversation with Donna, the child seated next to her, about Jessica's boyfriend, Donte[18], a child she had met at a summer play scheme. The topic of boyfriends was therefore a priority for Jessica in terms of her engagement with Amber Class' in-class peer culture.

Jessica's decision to include her boyfriend in her schooled text demonstrates her 'creative appropriation' (Corsaro 2000 p.92) of the adult set schooled literacy task in order to meet the Amber Class peer culture priority of enjoying discussions about boyfriends and girlfriends. In doing so, Jessica negotiated between two social priorities - her peer culture priority of discussing her boyfriend with Donna and the schooled literacy priority of producing a written text. Such negotiation has been noted by other authors studying young children's literacy practices in classrooms (cf Bourne 2002).

[18] It is not clear from the data whether this boyfriend was real or not.

This illustrates an aspect of Corsaro's theory of interpretive reproduction in that Jessica was '…not simply internalising society and culture, but …[was]… also actively contributing to cultural production and change…' (Corsaro 2000 p.92.) This view of Jessica as actively modifying schooled literacy tasks in order to negotiate current social priorities suggest her literacy practices involved more complex social processes than anticipated in the dominant discourses of schooled literacy.

4.3.3 Social interaction is integral to Jessica's literacy practices

The evidence discussed so far, of Jessica's picture drawing and the inclusion of the topic of boyfriends in Jessica's text, shows that social interaction was an integral part of Jessica's engagement with the schooled literacy task. Firstly, throughout Jessica's production of her drawing she talked about what she was doing; and secondly the topic of her sentence arose from a giggly discussion with Donna about boyfriends. I remind the reader that such social interactions are integral to both an LSP perspective on Literacy as a Social Practice and Corsaro's view of young children's socialisation as involving processes of 'interpretive reproduction' (Corsaro 2005, 2011).

This view that social interaction is a valuable and integral part of young children's literacy practices agrees with the work of other authors taking an ethnographic approach to studying young children's writing in classroom settings. For example, Dyson (2010) studied young children engaged in schooled writing tasks in US kindergarten and First Grade (equivalent to Year 1 – Jessica's year group and Year 2 in English schools respectively). She noted that:

> '…children's engagement in the complex communicative act of writing is energised and organised by their agency and desire to participate in a world shared by others.'
>
> [Dyson 2010 p.26]

The importance of social interaction is also noted by authors studying older primary school children engaged in schooled literacy tasks in the UK (cf Bourne 2002, Maybin

2007). This suggests that Jessica's work to engage in social interaction as she tackled the schooled literacy task was fairly typical of young children in classrooms. However, these social interactional aspects of young children's literacy practices are not valued in schooled *examinations* of young children's engagement with literacy tasks in the classroom (see 4.1.2, above). From a schooled perspective the examination of Jessica's proficiency in completing the task set was focused on her *individual* application of 'basic skills' such as spelling and sentence construction, not on her levels of participation and competence in social interactions about the task. This suggests that the adoption of theoretical perspectives that allow for the importance of social interactions in young children's literacy practices offers a wider view of young children's engagement with schooled literacy tasks than that allowed for in the current dominant discourses of schooled literacy in English literacy education.

4.3.4 Aspects of Jessica's literacy practices are shared within Amber Class' peer culture

Further evidence suggests that the social interactions that Jessica engaged in as she reproduced literacy practices in the classroom context were indicative of wider in-class peer culture practices of literacy that the young children in Amber Classroom collectively reproduced and shared as they engaged with schooled literacy tasks (cf Corsaro 2000). As discussed in Chapter 1 (1.4.1.3), Corsaro emphasises the importance of young children's peer cultures in processes of 'interpretive reproduction'. In this thesis, I draw on Corsaro's concept of the interpretive reproduction of peer culture in my analysis of young children's literacy practices. This enables the analysis of aspects of young children's literacy practices that I observed in Amber Classroom to include a consideration that those practices may be indicative of the children's collective reproduction of cultural routines, in this case literacy practices, through their peer cultures (cf Corsaro 1988).

For example, the social interactions that Jessica engaged in as she reproduced literacy practices included her sharing of texts with other children. Above, I discussed how Donna looked at the picture Jessica drew in her book at Jessica's invitation (Data Transcription 4.2). In that instance, Jessica invited Donna to share the text she was producing. A further example of such text sharing occurred a few minutes later. When Jessica finished writing her name in her book she showed it to the children seated around the table saying 'This is how you spell my name.' Although the other children did not pay attention to Jessica, Donna looked into Jessica's book (Fig. 4.7):

Figure 4.7 Donna (left) looks in Jessica's book at Jessica's invitation

Following this, Donna responded to what she saw in Jessica's book by indicating something in her own book with her pencil. Jessica looked at the place Donna had indicated (Fig. 4.8):

Figure 4.8 Donna indicates something in her book with her pencil.
Jessica looks in Donna's book.

These instances suggest that Jessica and Donna shared the texts they were producing as part of the social interactions they engaged in as they practised literacy.

However, analysis of the social interactions of other children seated at Jessica's table suggest that this sharing of texts was an aspect of Jessica and Donna's literacy practices that was more widely shared. For example, Fig 4.9 (below) shows another child seated at Jessica's table, Penny, engaged in sharing her text with Donna:

Figure 4.9 Penny (bottom left) invites Donna (top right) to look into her book.

In Fig 4.9, Penny invited Donna to look into Penny's book, demonstrating that the literacy practice of sharing each other's texts extended beyond Jessica and Donna. Furthermore, in the same lesson, Penny and India shared each other's texts as they engaged with the schooled writing task, for example in Fig. 4.10:

Figure 4.10 Penny (seated on the left) indicates a section of her text for India (right) to look at.

This sharing of texts extended beyond the children seated at Jessica's table. The next example concerns a digital recording of two children – Dean and Amina – seated at a different table to Jessica in the same November literacy lesson. In this example, Dean paused in his own work to intervene in Amina's text production:

1		((Dean leans across the table and looks into
2		Amina's work))
3	Dean:	You're meant to write (^^^^^^)
4		How old are you
5	Amina	(six)

Data Transcription 4:3 Audio recording with partial video 05/11/2010

In this instance, Dean leant across the table he was working at with the specific intention of looking in Amina's writing book at lines (1) and (2). Following this, he intervened directly in Amina's work, instructing her in what she was meant to write (3)

and (4). Amina did not object to either his looking at her work or his intervention in her text production. This example, from a pair of children seated away from Jessica's table in the same literacy lesson, suggests that sharing each other's written texts was a shared literacy practice within Amber Class' children's in-class peer culture.

The existence of such in-class peer culture literacy practices is anticipated in a theorisation of young children's literacy practices as involving 'interpretive reproduction'. However it is not anticipated in the dominant discourses of schooled literacy which view literacy as an *individual* practice. Within these discourses the requirement for an efficient *examination* of children's individual literacy acquisition normalises *individual* practices of engagement with texts. (Chapter 3: 3.2.3). This means that in adult planning and *examination* of young children's engagement with schooled writing tasks, young children are envisaged as being *individually* engaged in text production (4.1.3, above). The evidence above suggest this limits schooled literacy's perspective on young children's in - school literacy practices in that the emphasis on *individual* engagement with schooled literacy tasks restricts the schooled view of the relationship of young children's peer cultures to their reproduction of literacy practices.

Furthermore, this evidence of shared and stable in-class peer culture practices of literacy within Amber Class suggests that particular values, attitudes and beliefs about literacy were also shared within that peer culture. The in-class peer culture practice of sharing each other's texts described here indicate that the children valued *shared* engagement with schooled literacy tasks. Such a value does not align with the schooled emphasis on *individual* engagement. This suggests that young children's in-school peer culture values, attitudes and beliefs about what they are doing as they engage with schooled literacy tasks do not necessarily align with those found within the dominant discourses of schooled literacy.

This analysis suggests that the perspective offered by studying young children's engagement with schooled literacy tasks as involving the interpretive reproduction of literacy practices has the potential to uncover: i) those practices of literacy which are shared within children's classroom peer cultures; ii) the values, beliefs and attitudes that young children hold about literacy within their peer cultures; and iii) points of tension between those in-class peer culture values, attitudes and beliefs and those of the dominant schooled literacy. I shall return to these points in more depth in Chapter 5 -7 of this thesis. For the moment however I return to my analysis of Jessica's literacy practices as she engaged in a schooled writing task in a literacy lesson in Amber Classroom from November 2010.

In the final part of this analysis of Jessica's literacy practices, I demonstrate that the application of 'basic skills', which is emphasised and valued in schooled literacy discourses and practices, was an important part of Jessica's literacy practices. However, this application involved the creative adaptation of those skills through the interpretive reproduction of literacy practices. This demonstration is in two parts: i) an analysis of Jessica's composition of the sentence 'I have a boyfriend, Donte'; and ii) an analysis of her application of phonics to spell the words 'have' and 'boyfriend' and 'Donte'.

4.3.5 The interpretive reproduction of 'basic skills' 1 – composing and writing sentences

Within the normalised discourses of schooled literacy it is assumed that young children's engagement with schooled literacy tasks involves the straightforward application of 'basic skills' to the reading or production of texts (4.1.2, above). Here I demonstrate that Jessica's 'basic skills' of firstly orally composing, and secondly writing down, the sentence 'I have a boyfriend Donte' can be repositioned as part of wider social processes of the interpretive reproduction (Corsaro 2005, 2011) of literacy practices (Street 1984).

4.3.5.1 Jessica composes the sentence 'I have a boyfriend

Above I described how a schooled expectation for Jessica's participation in the literacy task was that the text should be written in sentences that 'make sense', each beginning with a capital letter and ending with a full stop. The schooled expectation for sentence composition was that Jessica would individually compose these sentences by saying them out loud prior to writing. However Jessica's processes of deploying this 'basic skill' in her production of her text suggests that this was only a small part of what she did.

Firstly, the stretch of interaction in Data Transcription 4.4 (below) shows that Jessica produced the sentence she eventually wrote in social interaction with Donna about Jessica's boyfriend:

```
1  Jessica:  I'm going to write (I've got a boyfriend.)
2  Donna:    What's his name?
3  Jessica:  Donte
4            ((Jessica pulls a face, throws her hands
5            up in the air as she says Donte))
```

Data Transcription 4:4 Video and Audio recording 05/11/2010

Jessica's written sentence (Fig. 4.5 above) reads 'I have a boyfriend Donte', which aligns closely with what Jessica said to Donna in lines (1) and (3). The addition of the boyfriend's name – Donte – appears to have arisen as a result of Donna's question at (2). Thus, whilst Jessica did compose her sentence out loud according to the schooled literacy expectations of her text production (4.1.3, above) this took place in wider social processes than the individual application of 'basic skills' normalised within schooled literacy. In this case the sentence was composed as a result firstly of an Amber Class' peer culture interest in boyfriends and girlfriends; and secondly in a process of social interaction between Jessica and Donna.

4.3.5.2 Jessica writes the sentence' I have a boyfriend'

Jessica's writing down of her sentence also involved wider social processes than those normalised within schooled literacy discourses. The data transcription below (4:4) illustrates this as Jessica drew on further social interaction with Donna as she began to write her sentence down[19]:

```
20  Jessica:   ((Jessica is saying her sentence))
21             I
22             (.)((Jessica turns and looks towards the carpet area
23             of the classroom))
24             have
25  Donna:     [a ((Donna leans forward and looks at Jessica's work))
26  Jessica:   [huh ((Jessica leans forward and appears to mark the
27             page))
28  Donna:     [I have a
```

Data Transcription 4:5 Video and Audio recording 05/11/2010

Jessica began to say the sentence she eventually wrote at line (21). At (24), she said the word 'have', suggesting that whatever she saw when she glanced towards the carpet area at (22) and (23) (most probably the text produced by the teacher during the shared writing (Fig.4.3) gave her an idea for her sentence. At (25), Donna began to assist in the composition of the sentence, looking in Jessica's book and supplying the next word 'a'. As Jessica began to say the first sound in the word have - 'huh' (26), Donna repeated the beginning of Jessica's sentence 'I have a' at line (28).

These two stretches of interaction between Jessica and Donna demonstrate that Jessica fulfilled the schooled expectation that she would compose each sentence of her text orally before writing it down (4.1.3, above). However this took place as part of a wider literacy practice that included: i) Jessica and Donna's shared peer culture interest in boyfriends; ii) positive social relations between Jessica and Donna; iii) the social

[19] As in the rest of the thesis, the numbering of this transcription is only intended to support the discussion of the interaction contained in the main text. In this case, it is not continuous with that above as this interaction takes place about a minute after.

interactions between the two children; and iv) features of the physical classroom environment (the displayed shared writing). Through the interpretive reproduction of literacy practices, Jessica composed the sentence she eventually wrote by drawing on all of these aspects of her social world and transforming them into literacy practices that supported her engagement with the schooled literacy task. This evidence suggests that understanding such practices to be reproduced through processes of interpretive reproduction (Corsaro 2005, 2011) repositions the schooled emphasis on Jessica's acquisition and application of 'basic skills' within broader discourses of Literacy as a Social Practice. This point is further illustrated below through a micro-analysis (Chapter 2: 2.3.1.1) of Jessica's use of phonics to spell.

4.3.6 The interpretive reproduction of 'basic skills' 2 - Using phonics to spell

Jessica's interpretive reproduction of 'basic skills' as part of her literacy practices is further exemplified by analysis of her use of a phonic strategy to spell words in her sentence 'I have a boyfriend'. I remind the reader that a schooled expectation for the application of phonic knowledge involves children saying out loud the word they wish to spell then breaking it down into its smallest units of sound. They then write the word down by matching letters to each unit of sound said. Thus 'cat' is firstly said as /c/ /a/ /t/, then the letters 'C' 'A' and 'T' are matched to each sound and the word is written down. This was a central part of English education policy for the teaching of early literacy when I collected my data (Rose 2006; DfES 2006; 4.1.2, above). However, as well as the variations in spelling caused by Jessica's London accent (4.2.1, Footnote 17, above), Jessica's use of phonics in spelling the words from her sentence suggests she creatively adapted this basic skill when she applied it to the production of her written sentence.

I shall illustrate this point with an analysis of the data presented below which comprises a copy of Jessica's written sentence 'I have a boyfriend Donte' - which Jessica spelt as 'I have a bofed doay' - and a transcript of what Jessica said as she composed this

sentence. The transcript continues from that above, when Jessica and Donna said Jessica's sentence prior to writing. I have repeated that short section of the interaction to emphasise the continuation. For clarity I note that lower-case letters represented between slashes (e.g. /d/) represent the sounds Jessica pronounced as an aid to spelling:

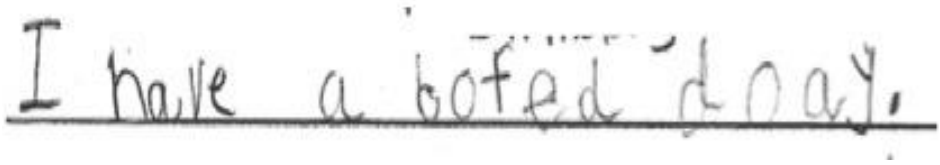


Figure 4.11 Jessica's written sentence – 'I have a boyfriend Donte'.
The shaded areas in the transcript below correspond to Jessica's sounding out of the words 'have',' boyfriend' and 'Donte'.

20	Jessica:	I /guh/ ((Jessica turns and looks towards the
21		carpet area of the classroom)
22		I have
23	Donna:	((leaning forward and looking at Jessica's
24		work))
25		[a
26	Jessica:	[huh
27	Donna:	[I have a ((Donna turns and looks at Bertha's
28		work
29	Jessica:	[/huh/
	HAVE	
30		/huh/ /a/ /v/ have
31		(.)
32		a
33	**BOYFRIEND**	a /b/ /b/ /buh/ /buh/ /or/ /e/ /guh/
34		I have a /b/ /oy/ (^^^^)
35		/guh/ /er/ /d/ /d/ /d/ /d/ /d/ /der/ (^^^^)
36	**DONTE**	/duh/ /duh/ /or/ /duh/ /ay /ay/ /yuh/ /yuh/ yak
37		((Jessica glances towards the camera))
38		/yuh/ yak
39		((Jessica looks towards the camera - where I
40		am))Miss Henning-
41		((Jessica turns to another adult behind her))
42		Mi::ss
43		((Jessica goes out of shot))

```
44              How do you-
45              How do you write yak write yak
46              /yuh/ /yuh/ yak
```

Data Transcription 4:6 Audio and Video Recording 05/11/2010

The transcript (4.6) and writing excerpt (Fig. 4.11) above shows that Jessica did 'sound out' words as she produced her sentence. Of particular interest in this analysis are her sounding out of **have** at lines (29) - (30); **boyfriend**, (33) – (35); and **Donte** (36) – (38). Jessica's work to sound out these words agrees with the schooled expectation for using phonics as the 'prime approach' to spelling for children of her age (cf DfES 2006). However, a closer analysis suggests that Jessica adapted this basic skill through processes of interpretive reproduction, by combining it with other features available to her in her social world. To illustrate this, I focus on her spelling of the words 'have', 'boyfriend' and 'Donte' in the sentence above.

4.3.6.1 Jessica spells 'have'

When Jessica spelt the word 'have' – the second word in her sentence - she is heard breaking it down into three phonemes on the recording - /h/ (pronounced with a schwa as 'huh'), /a/ and /v/ at lines (29) and (30). However the written word in Jessica's text is conventionally spelt – HAVE - with a letter 'E' on the end. Jessica did not pronounce this 'E' when she sounded the word out. This makes sense as this 'E' is not pronounced when 'have' is said. However, had Jessica been relying on the basic skill of phonics alone to spell the word, it would have been spelt 'hav' in her written text. Jessica's use of the 'e' in her written spelling (Fig. 4.11, above) suggests that she combined phonics with an additional strategy to secure a conventional spelling of the word. She may have known how to spell it in the first place or saw how it was written when she turned to look towards the shared writing on the carpet at lines (20) and (21) on the transcript above. (The shared writing at this point contained the sentence 'I *have* golden hair' Fig. 4.3) This selection and combination of features in order to spell the

word ‘have’ suggests that Jessica’s reproduction of the ‘basic skill’ of using phonics to spell involved its adaptation to meet the requirements of the task in hand.

4.3.6.2 Jessica spells ‘boyfriend’

The creative adaptation of the basic skill of phonics through the ‘interpretive reproduction’ (Corsaro 2005, 2011) of literacy practices (Street 1984) is also suggested by Jessica’s process of spelling ‘boyfriend’. Between (33) and (35) in Data Transcription 4.6 (above), Jessica appears to say sounds associated with the word ‘boyfriend’ – a /b/, /oy/ and /d/ are heard on the recording. This sounding out does not include an /f/ sound. However a letter ‘F’ is included in her spelling (Fig 4.11, above). This could mean that Jessica diverted from the official practice of sounding out loud, and pronounced the phoneme in her head, or it could suggest that she was combining what she knew of phonics with a visual strategy, having an idea of what the word might look like. In either case the school taught strategy of using phonics to spell was adapted to include additional knowledge about words or strategies for spelling in Jessica’s literacy practices.

4.3.6.3 Jessica spells ‘Donte’

Another way in which Jessica adapted the ‘basic skill’ of using phonics for spelling is evidenced in her spelling of ‘Donte’ – the name of the boyfriend - as the last word in her sentence. Jessica seemed to encounter a problem with the final sound, the /yuh/, at lines (36) to (38) above. She associated the sound with the word ‘yak’ (36) thus applying the mnemonic which the school’s phonic scheme used to help children remember the sound (the children said /y/ /y/ /y/ yak when memorising the letter and its sound). She then spent time (39) – (46) trying to find someone who could demonstrate how to write the letter down. When she went out of shot (43) it is possible that she was seeking out a third party to help her. This suggestion is supported by the audio recording of her asking how to write ‘/yuh/ /yuh/ yak (44) and (45). She may also have been looking for the classroom display of letters and sounds that was in the area of the

classroom she moved towards. In either case, Jessica's phonic knowledge only partially solved the problem of spelling, so she sought out other resources available in the social world of the classroom to help her.

These examples suggest that Jessica's application of the 'basic skill' of phonics to spelling was adapted in her literacy practices to include other aspects of the social world of the classroom. These included: i) Jessica's social interaction with adults in the classroom; ii) the mnemonic (y-y-y yak) she had been taught as part of the school's phonic scheme; iii) Jessica's prior knowledge of words; and (possibly) iv) Jessica's interaction with wall displays in the physical classroom environment. I suggest that this means that schooled *examinations* informed by assumptions that Jessica's literacy proficiency is related to a straightforward application of 'basic skills' are too narrow to account for her proficiency in adapting those skills as part of her interpretive reproduction of literacy practices[20].

In summary, the analysis above of video and audio recordings of Jessica engaged in the writing of her sentence suggests that the dominant discourses which inform the schooled expectations (4.1.3, above) for Jessica's engagement with the written task described in 4.1, (above) anticipate only a small part of the complex literacy practices Jessica produced as she engaged with the schooled writing task. In this thesis these processes are understood to involve young children's interpretive reproduction (Corsaro 2005, 2011) of literacy practices, a perspective that supports the repositioning of the 'basic skills' so valued within schooled literacy discourses in wider social processes.

From this perspective, young children's literacy practices in the social world of the classroom are contingent upon their values, attitudes and beliefs about what they are

[20] For a further discussion of Amber Class' children's use of phonics see Chapter 7:7.4.2.

doing as they practice literacy in that social context. Through processes of interpretive reproduction young children creatively appropriate aspects of that social context to reproduce literacy practices specifically adapted to meet what they consider to be the demands of the social world of the classroom (4.3.2, above). In the case described above Jessica appropriated aspects of her social world that included: i) interests and values drawn from her participation in Amber Class peer culture; ii) social interactions with her peers; iii) 'basic skills' taught in schooled literacy lessons; iv) the schooled literacy task itself; and v) the knowledge of adults around the classroom. Other features of the interpretive reproduction of literacy practices exemplified here are that:

- Social interaction is an integral part of the interpretive reproduction of literacy practices (4.3.3).

- Both young children's literacy practices and the interpretations of their social worlds that inform those practices may be reproduced collaboratively as shared and stable classroom peer culture practices of literacy (4.3.4).

- Children's values, beliefs and attitudes about literacy and schooling are a part of their literacy practices. Such beliefs may be held individually or collectively as part of young children's in-class peer cultures (4.3.1; 4.3.4).

- These values, attitudes and beliefs about literacy and schooling may differ from those of the dominant schooled literacy (4.3.1).
- The interpretive reproduction of literacy practices enables children to negotiate schooled and peer group priorities as they engage in schooled literacy lessons (4.3.2).

- The ‘basic skills’ young children are taught in schooled literacy may require creative adaptation via processes of interpretive reproduction in order to secure their successful application to engagement with texts (4.3.5; 4.3.6).

The aspects of young children’s in-school literacy practices listed above are not confined to Jessica and the children in Amber Classroom. Different aspects of these practices have been noted by other authors studying young children’s engagement with schooled literacy tasks (cf Kress 1997; Bourne 2002; Corsaro and Nelson 2003; Kress et al 2005; Kelly 2004; Wohlwend 2005; Maybin 2007; Dyson 2010). However such aspects are not part of schooled *examinations* of young children’s literacy practices which I detailed in 4.1.3 (above). This suggests that the dominant discourses of schooled literacy, which these examinations draw on, offer only a partial perspective on what young children do when they practice literacy in classroom contexts.

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated one of the effects of the enactment of the dominant discourses of schooled literacy through the everyday application of disciplinary technologies to organise schooled literacy curricula. This effect was to constrain schooled expectations for, and interpretations of, young children’s engagement with schooled literacy tasks. Within these constraints, adults engaged in schooled literacy practices set literacy tasks for young children which are differentiated for particular groups of children according to their *ranking* in terms of what is considered *normal* for a young child of their age group’s acquisition of ‘basic skills’ in literacy. The outcomes of the children’s engagement with such tasks are *examined* according to each child’s success or otherwise in *individually* completing the task according to the expectations of schooled literacy. These expectations *normalise* the schooled literacy assumption that children’s engagement with reading or producing texts involves the individual application of ‘basic skills’ that each child has acquired as they progress along a universal path towards literacy.

However the evidence in this chapter suggests that this schooled perspective of young children's engagement with schooled literacy offers only a limited view of what young children do as they practice literacy in schooled contexts. The chapter focused on the literacy practices of one child – Jessica – ranked as 'average' in comparison with the other children in her class. Within this lesson, Jessica was expected to produce a text which closely followed the model provided by her teacher. She was to use a phonic method for spelling; compose her sentences orally before writing them down; and write sentences that 'made sense', each beginning with a capital letter and a full stop. However these expectations were not sufficient to account for what Jessica actually did as she engaged with the task set. I have argued that a more sufficient account of Jessica's engagement with the schooled literacy task is to understand it as the 'interpretive reproduction' (Corsaro 2005, 2011) of literacy practices (Street 1984). Such practices involve the creative appropriation and adaptation of features of the children's in-school social context in order to produce literacy practices that enable the children to meet their interpretations of the priorities of that context. Such practices may be produced and shared within young children's classroom peer cultures, the formation of which is supported by the institutional organisation of young children into same-age teaching groups. I believe that this theorisation offers a wider perspective of young children's encounter with schooled literacy than that normalised within dominant discourses of schooled literacy.

This suggests that the current UK government's increasing reliance on the outcomes of tests of 'basic skills' such as phonics (Phonics Screening Check introduced in 2012[21]) and grammar (Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar - 'SPAG' - test introduced 2013 for 10 year olds and 2016 for six year olds[22]) to inform policy decisions relating to English literacy education are informed by only a partial perspective on the relationship between young children's development of literacy practices, schooled pedagogical

[21] In England, national tests are prepared by the UK government's 'Standards and Testing Agency' https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/standards-and-testing-agency (accessed August 2016)

[22] see note 21 (above)

practices and the social world of the classroom. I suggest that the perspective described in this chapter opens up new avenues of inquiry into this relationship that have the potential to inform more effective policy decisions about the literacy education of young children. In Chapters 5 – 7 of this thesis I shall explore some of these avenues in relation to i) the ways in which young children's encounter with the discourses and practices of schooled literacy in their everyday in school lives affect their interpretive reproduction of literacy practices in the social world of the classroom; and ii) young children's values, attitudes and beliefs about what they are doing as they practice literacy in schooling. I begin this work in the next chapter (Chapter 5) with an analysis of the children in Amber Classroom's in-class peer culture practice of peer-to-peer copying.

Chapter 5 The interpretive reproduction of peer-to-peer copying

This chapter demonstrates that the literacy practices Amber Class' children interpretively reproduced in the classroom were especially adapted to meet what the children considered to be the requirements of practising literacy in the institutional context of schooling. To illustrate this, I offer a detailed analysis of Amber Class' children's interpretive reproduction of a shared and stable in-class peer culture literacy practice of peer-to-peer copying. I begin by describing peer-to-peer copying and the special requirements the children invoked in order for this classroom peer culture practice to take place in the classroom (5.1). I then describe the aspects of the institutional setting which gave rise to features of this practice. These were: i) Amber Class' children's in-class peer culture value for sharing engagement with schooled literacy tasks (5.2); ii) the tension between this peer culture value for shared engagement with schooled literacy tasks and the schooled value for *examining* individual engagement with such tasks (5.3; Chapter 3: 3.2.3; Foucault 1977); and iii) the children's perception that participating in schooled literacy tasks necessitated competing with one's peers to gain a more favourable *examination* of their literacy competence (5.4). This analysis demonstrates that young children's in-school interpretive reproduction of literacy practices can be affected by: a) the formation of children's classroom peer cultures which is supported by the schooled organisation of young children by age; b) the children's perceptions of the requirements for participating in schooled literacy tasks that develop within those classroom peer cultures; c) the need for young children to negotiate differing values, attitudes and beliefs about literacy that co-exist in classroom contexts; and d) the dominance of schooled values, attitudes and beliefs about literacy, as enacted in the disciplinary technologies of *examination* and *ranking* (Foucault 1977).

The chapter demonstrates the complexity of young children's interpretive reproduction of literacy practices in the institutional context of the classroom. Such complexity is unaccounted for in current policy discourses which assume that the literacy acquisition of all young children in schools can be supported through the teaching of 'basic skills' in literacy through 'best practice' approaches that can be applied to all classroom contexts (Chapter 1: 1.1). I conclude that such discourses offer limited scope for understanding the diversity of values, attitudes and beliefs about literacy that inform the literacy practices that are reproduced in UK classrooms. These values, attitudes and beliefs directly affect both schooled practices of literacy and young children's interpretive reproduction of literacy practices in the social world of the classroom. I argue that such effects need to be better understood in policies which aim to support young children's literacy acquisition in schools.

5.1 Peer-to-peer copying in Amber Class children's in-class peer culture

In institutions of schooling, the organisation of young children by age contributes to the formation of children's in-school peer cultures (cf Corsaro 2000). Within these peer cultures, children develop shared perceptions of the requirements for participating in schooled literacy tasks (Chapter 1: 1.4.1.3; Chapter 4:4.3.4). Each section of this chapter examines a different aspect of the literacy practice (cf Street 1984, Barton and Hamilton 1998) of peer-to-peer copying that Amber Class children interpretively reproduced (cf Corsaro 2005, 2011) within their in-class peer culture. This peer culture practice was especially adapted to meet the children's interpretations of the priorities of practising literacy in the institutional context of schooling.

I begin my description of the children's literacy practice of peer-to-peer copying here (5.1.1, below) with a definition of what I mean by the term peer-to-peer copying. I then draw on my ethnographic data to describe the special requirements that Amber Class

children invoked in order for the practice to go ahead in the institutional context of Amber Class (5.1.2 – 5.1.6 inclusive).

5.1.1 A definition of peer-to-peer copying

In this thesis peer-to-peer copying refers to the observable strategy of one child re-transcribing part of a second child's written text into their own. For example, in Fig. 5.1 (below) Callum is looking at Colin's written text in order to re-transcribe it into his own book:

Figure 5.1 Callum looks into Colin's book as a preparation for re-transcribing a part of Colin's text into his own.

In the examples found in my data, usually two texts were involved and the copying child looked carefully at a second child's text before re-transcribing a section of it in their own text. Most examples suggest the children used the strategy to address a specific problem, most commonly to spell individual words or seek out new vocabulary. In the instances of peer-to-peer copying I have in my data the author of the second text was present, usually seated next to or at the same table as the child who wished to copy. Within Amber Class' classroom peer culture, peer-to-peer copying was a particular variant of the children's in-class peer culture practice of sharing texts under production with their peers that I described in Chapter 4 (4.3.4) and will return to in more detail in 5.2 (below).

However, the children's practice of peer-to-peer copying was in tension with a schooled value for *examining* individually produced texts (Chapter 4: 4.3.3: 4.3.4) which meant that peer-to-peer copying was explicitly discouraged within schooled literacy practices. I shall discuss this schooled value and its link to the *examination* (Chapter 3: 3.1.2.3) of young children's literacy competence in 5.3, below. This schooled discouragement did not deter the children from carrying out peer-to-peer copying. Rather, within Amber Class' in-class peer culture, the children reproduced a set of special requirements that allowed them to negotiate both classroom peer culture and schooled literacy values in their interpretive reproduction of the literacy practice of peer-to-peer copying. I describe these requirements here in relation to my ethnographic data.

5.1.2 Amber Class' in-class peer culture special requirements for peer-to-peer copying

In this part of my analysis of the in-class peer culture literacy practice of peer-to-peer copying I draw on my ethnographic data to illustrate four special requirements that the children invoked in order for the practice to go ahead in the institutional context of the classroom. The analysis is drawn from 14 episodes of peer-to-peer copying, involving at least 15 of the 30 children in the class over 9 literacy lessons with a focus on writing from November 2010 to July 2011. These episodes demonstrate that the practice of peer-to-peer copying within the peer culture of Amber Class involved the following requirements:

- **Positive peer relations should exist between both parties**

  Copying could only take place when positive peer relations existed between children involved in peer-to-peer copying (Examples 1 and 2).

- **Permission should be granted by the child whose text was to be copied**

  Copying could only take place if an explicit invitation to copy had been offered or permission granted by the child or children who produced the original text (Example 3).

- **Justification of requests for copying, or accusations of copying, from other children's work**

  Requests for permitted copying, or accusations of unpermitted copying required interactional work of justification including giving supporting evidence (Examples 4- 6).

- **Low risk of adult *surveillance***

  Peer-to-peer copying should not be observed by adults in the classroom (Examples 7 – 9).

Here, I shall exemplify these in-class peer culture requirements for peer-to-peer copying using the data I collected during my ethnographic study of the literacy practices of Amber Class' children.

5.1.3 Positive peer relations should exist between both parties

Peer-to-peer copying could only take place where positive peer relations existed. The children emphasised their positive relations when engaging in peer-to-peer copying and appeared to regard the practice as a way of maintaining such positive relations, as I demonstrate here.

Example 1: Emphasising positive relations – Veronica and Saira

Example 1 concerns Veronica and Saira, two children for whom there are many examples of positive peer relations throughout the data, such as discussions of shared

out-of-school activities. In a writing lesson in March 2011, Veronica was heard asking permission from Saira to copy the word ‘creepy’:

1	Saira:	Mmmm
2		creepy
3	Veronica:	mmmm creepy ((laughs))
4		Can I write creepy
5	Saira:	Okay
6	Veronica:	Can I steal it
7	Saira:	You're allowed
8		Because you're in my group
9	Veronica:	Yeah

Data Transcription 5:1 Audio recording literacy lesson 10/03/2011

In this instance, Veronica made an explicit request to copy the word ‘creepy’ from Saira at line (4). Saira gave permission (5) and justified this permission by saying ‘You’re in my group’ (7) and (8). Thus Saira emphasised that positive social relations between herself and Veronica, in this case evidenced by membership of the same ‘group’, were a justification for permitting peer-to-peer copying.

Example 2: Maintaining positive relations – Jessica and Donna

Within Amber Class’ peer culture, the requirement for positive peer relations to exist between children in order for copying to go ahead meant that children could use invitations to copy to maintain such relations. In this example I return to the November lesson discussed in Chapter 4 (05/11/2010), where Jessica and Donna were seen to co-operate in their production of the texts required by their teacher (Chapter 4: 4.3.5). Donna and Jessica’s relationship was not as positive as that of Saira and Veronica (Example 1 above). For example, they seemed to have differing attitudes to schooled literacy (Example 8, below); they did not usually seek each other out in class; and there is no evidence in my data of their relationship extending beyond the classroom. During

the lesson Jessica invited Donna to copy her work twice and copied Donna's work twice. I shall discuss one of these four instances in greater depth in Example 5 (below), but for the moment I briefly describe three instances to illustrate how Jessica used peer-to-peer copying to maintain positive relations with Donna during this particular lesson.

In the first instance, Jessica offered her spelling of the word 'hair' for Donna to copy when Donna requested help with the spelling; in the second instance, Jessica leant over the table and firstly asked Donna 'Are you copying me?' before saying 'I'm copying you (because) I'm your friend'; and in the third instance, once Jessica had finished her text, she offered it to Donna for copying, an offer that Donna declined (see Fig. 5.2 below).

Figure 5.2 Jessica (left) offers her text to Donna, saying 'Do you want to copy me?'

These instances suggest that, within Amber Class in-class peer culture, the special requirement that peer-to-peer copying take place where positive social relations existed between children could be used as a social tool for maintaining such relations.

5.1.4 Permission should be granted by the child whose text was to be copied

A second requirement for the literacy practice of peer-to-peer copying within Amber Class' in-class peer culture was that it could only take place if an explicit invitation to copy had been offered or permission granted by the child or children who produced the original text. There is evidence of both permission and invitation in the examples above. In Example 1, Saira stressed that Veronica was '*allowed*' to copy and in Example 2, Jessica granted copying permission to Donna by inviting her to copy her work. I now discuss a further example related to the peer requirement for permission which concerns both the granting and refusal of permission to copy.

Example 3: Permitting and refusing copying – Sophia and Veronica

In a lesson from 19/05/2011 Veronica attempted to copy two words from Sophia. The first request, for the word 'ugly' was assented to, however the second attempt, for the word, 'awful' – was refused. Here, in Data Transcription 5.2 (below) Sophia assented to Veronica's request to copy the word 'ugly' at line (2) and helped her copy the spelling (6):

1	Veronica:	How d'you spell
2		ugly
3	Sophia:	Ugly like this
4	Veronica:	Okay
5	Sophia:	Easy
6		/u/ /g/ /luh/ /ee/
7		Easy
8	Veronica:	/ee/
9		/uh/ /ger/ /lee/

Data Transcription 5:2 Audio recording literacy lesson 19/05/2011

However, in the next moment (Data Transcription 5.3, below) Sophia began to write the word 'awful' and at the same time explicitly forbade Veronica from copying her:

```
10  Sophia:    (awful)
11  Sophia:    Don't copy me ((singing))
12  Veronica:  I'm not ((singing))
13  Sophia:    You are
14             Think of different words
```

Data Transcription 5:3 Audio recording literacy lesson 19/05/2011

When Sophia refused Veronica permission to copy at lines (13) and (14) her tone of voice changed from the playful singing one she initially adopted at (11) to a more insistent one. This seemed to stress the seriousness of this refusal of permission. This example illustrates that peer-to-peer copying could only take place where permission had been granted by the child whose work was to be copied. However, I note here that it is significant that Sophia allowed the copying of the word 'ugly' whilst denying the copying of the word 'awful'. I shall return to this point in 5.4.2 (below), where I discuss the children's competitive participation in schooled literacy tasks.

5.1.5 Justification of requests for copying and justification of accusations of copying

Requests to copy and accusations of unpermitted copying required interactional work of justification. Such justification work was not required when inviting or forbidding copying. Instances of unjustified invitations and forbidding have already been seen in the examples above. In Example 3, when Veronica requested a spelling of 'ugly', Sophia invited her to copy; and in Example 2 Jessica invited Donna to copy from her. In terms of forbidding, in Example 3, Sophia forbade Veronica from copying saying 'Don't copy me'. In each of these cases, justification was not required.

However, when a request to copy or accusation of unpermitted copying was made justification was required. This justification was either to support the permitting of copying or to give grounds for the accusation or refutation of an accusation of copying. Justification of copying has already been seen in Example 1, when Saira justified her

permitting Veronica to copy by stressing their positive relations, saying she was allowed to copy ‘because you’re in my group’. I give further examples of justification here.

5.1.5.1 Justifications of permitted copying

Example 4: Justifying copying- Dean and Amina

In this example, from a writing lesson on 05/11/2010, Dean discovered Amina copying from his text. Amina was known in Amber Classroom for her reluctance to speak. However, during the writing task, Amina seemed willing for Dean to support her and, from the partial video recording of their interactions, remained engaged with him through eye-contact, occasional short utterances and non-verbal signals such as head shakes. Below is a still from the video taken at the point when Dean asked if Amina was copying him (Fig.5.3):

Figure 5.3 Dean (right) suggests Amina is copying him
Amina (left) maintains eye contact but does not speak.

In the interaction that accompanied Fig. 5.3, Dean began by addressing Amina, saying ‘Are you copying now’?’ Amina maintained eye contact with Dean, although she did not respond verbally. Dean then justified Amina’s alleged copying, saying ‘Are you stuck?’ Their interaction was then interrupted by the teacher.

I believe that Amina did not seek permission from Dean to copy in this instance because of her reluctance to speak in the classroom. This reluctance meant she had breached the in-class peer culture requirement that permission be sought before peer-to-peer copying could take place. Dean worked to repair this breach of the peer culture

requirements, justifying Amina's actions with the explanation that she was 'stuck' and did not know how to complete the schooled task. Since Dean had helped her throughout the lesson, the idea that she was stuck offered a fair justification for her resorting to copying.

Example 5: Justifying copying – Jessica and Donna

In this example, taken from the same lesson as Example 2 (above), Jessica was seeking permission from Donna to copy her work. In Example 2 (above) Jessica had issued invitations for Donna to copy her work in order to maintain positive relations between herself and Donna. However in the stretch of interaction below (Data Transcription 5.4), Donna initially denied Jessica permission to copy. This prompted Jessica to begin negotiations by seeking a justification for copying that Donna would accept. Data Transcription 5.4 begins with Jessica's initial justification of her request to copy the spelling of the word 'how' from Donna's book:

1	Jessica:	I'm asking you 'cos I don't know
2		[what's first=
3	Donna:	[(^^^^)
4		[((Jessica gives a vigorous negative
5		shake of the head. Donna gives a
6		single negative shake of the head
7		then looks at Jessica's book))
8	Donna :	=You're not allowed to copy
9	Jessica:	Yeah because yeah I can still know
10		how old I am

Data Transcription 5:4 Video and audio recording 05/11/2011

Jessica initially justified her request to re-transcribe Donna's spelling of the word 'how' into her book by asserting that she did not know what 'came first' (in the spelling of 'how') at lines (1) and (2). However, Donna objected to this request ((5) - (8)) on the grounds that such copying was not 'allowed' (8). Jessica then began to negotiate permission to copy, justifying her request on the grounds that it was all right to copy the

spelling of the word ‘how’ –a transcriptional aspect of the writing - as long as the content of the writing was her own personal knowledge, in this case her age ((9) - (10)). This argument secured Jessica the right to copy. However in Example 8 (below), I return to this incident to show how Donna remained concerned about adult surveillance. For the moment I note that Jessica’s request for permission to copy an aspect of Donna’s written text involved a need to justify the proposed copying.

Examples 4 and 5 have both concerned the justification of permitted copying. The next example concerns justifications both as part of, and in response to, accusations of unpermitted copying.

5.1.5.2 Justifications related to accusations and refutations of unpermitted copying

Example 6: Unpermitted copying – negative social relations

In this example, from a lesson on 10/02/2011 the children were organised into small groups to share the planning of a piece of writing. Daniella and Rani were part of one group of three children and Meena was part of another group of three. The children were seated at the same table. Accusations of copying seemed to form part of a rivalry between these two groups. However, in each instance the accusation or refutation of an accusation was justified with the presentation of evidence:

1	Daniella:	She's copying us
2	Meena:	No I'm not
3	Daniella:	You you writed I and we writed I
4		So why are you copying us
5	Meena:	We're doing I'm
6	?:	(Doesn't matter we can put that in the middle)
7	Rani:	Because we don't want you to see us

Data Transcription 5:5 Audio recording 10/02/2011

Here Daniella accused Meena’s group of copying at line (1), drawing on evidence from both group’s texts to suggest that the ‘I’ that was written in Meena’s group text was copied from Daniella’s group text (3). Meena rejected this suggestion, justifying her

refutation with further evidence, saying the letter 'I' her group had written was part of a different word – 'I'm' (5). Thus both the accusation and the refutation were justified with the presentation of evidence.

In this same stretch of interaction, there is also evidence of a denial of permission to copy. At line (6) the discussion continued with some-one suggesting putting something 'in the middle'. From Rani's comment this 'something' was intended to block Meena's group's view of Rani and Daniella's work (7). This blocking of the view would effectively be a denial of permission to copy. Thus the negative social relations between these two groups of children led to firstly the presentation of evidence to justify both accusations of copying and refutations of those accusations; and secondly a denial of permission to copy.

5.1.6 Low risk of adult surveillance

The final special requirement of peer-to-peer copying was that of a low risk of adult surveillance[23]. *Surveillance* is one of the disciplinary technologies described by Foucault as forming part of the *examination*. In Chapter 3 (3.1.2.2; 3.2.2) I explained that within West London schools this practice it is most commonly referred to as 'observation' and was carried out by adults assessing children's literacy competence or monitoring classroom behaviour. For at least some children, the possibility of being observed by an adult who was present within the classroom context was of concern when deploying peer-to-peer copying, as the examples below demonstrate.

Example 7: 'I won't do anything' – Sophia and Veronica

This instance is taken from the same lesson in May 2011 as Example 3. In the current example, Sophia's accusation of copying in Data Transcription 5.6 (below) was lighter

[23] This concern did not seem to relate to the presence of recording devices in the room as part of my research. Although the presence of such devices was made clear to the children, peer-to-peer copying continued, as seen in the examples above.

in tone than Sophia's refusal of permission to copy the word 'awful' in Example 3 (above). As the transcription begins, the teacher was approaching their table. For clarity, I note that the triple colon indicates the speaker has stretched the preceding sound:

1	Sophia:	Are you copying me
2	Veronica:	No:::
3	Sophia:	(Yeah
4		I won't do anything)
5		((The teacher arrives at the table))

Data Transcription 5:6 Audio Recording 19/05/2011

At (1), Sophia adopted a playful tone to ask 'Are you copying me', as did Veronica in her response (2). This was followed by Sophia assuring Veronica that she 'won't do anything' ((3) and (4)). I believe that this meant that Sophia did not intend to tell the approaching teacher about her accusation that Veronica was copying. Thus Sophia emphasised her protection of Veronica's alleged copying from adult surveillance as part of the maintenance of their positive social relations. This comment shows that the children were concerned to conceal instances of peer-to-peer copying from adult surveillance. Below is a further example.

Example 8: Concern for adult surveillance - Donna

This example continues from Example 5 (5.1.5.1. above). I remind the reader that Jessica had secured permission to copy the word 'how' from Donna's book. As the interaction continued (Data Transcription 5.7, below) Donna allowed Jessica to copy from her book, but did so with some reservation, appearing to account for potential surveillance by adults as she did so:

11		((Jessica turns and points to the	
12		board then turns back))	
13	Donna:	(^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^) I can I can	
14		((Donna points at her own book.	
15		Jessica leans over to look into it.	
16		Donna looks directly at the	
17		camera, then to her right.))	
18	Jessica:	huh ((Jessica turns back to her	
19		own book. Donna looks back at the	
20		camera))	
21	Jessica:	huh ((both girls lean over their	
22		own books)	

Data Transcription 5:7 Audio and Video Recording 05/11/2011

At line (13) Donna appeared to give permission for copying, pointing to something in her own book (14) which Jessica began to copy (15). However Donna then looked towards the camera (16), then to her right (17), then towards the camera again (19) – (20), before returning to her own work. My interpretation of these looks was that they were cautious. Moreover, I believe Donna's caution concerned the possibility of being observed by the adults in the room, rather than the camera. This is because when Donna glanced towards the camera, I was seated close to it. However a few minutes after this stretch of interaction Donna explicitly invited Jessica to copy from her text with no caution at all. The camera was in the same place at that point, but there were no adults seated near either the camera or the children's table. This suggests that Donna was concerned about adult observation of her copying, rather than the possibility of it being recorded on video.

It is significant here that Jessica did not appear as concerned as Donna about being observed in this example. She leant over the table to look into Donna's book (16) and loudly repeated the letter she was copying ((18) and (21)). This comparative unconcern could be simply because Jessica had not noticed my presence next to the camera. However it could also reflect differing attitudes towards schooled literacy practices. I briefly discuss this here.

I remind the reader that in Example 5 (above), Jessica negotiated to copy the spelling of the word 'how' from Donna's text. Her argument was that it was all right to copy transcriptional aspects of Donna's text provided the content of the text was her own. My data shows that throughout the year Donna's literacy practices tended to align more closely with those of schooling than Jessica's. Thus, I believe that Jessica's relatively sophisticated argument was intended to negotiate a compromise between Donna's greater alignment with schooled literacy's attitudes towards peer-to-peer copying and Jessica's greater alignment with Amber Class' in-class peer culture attitudes towards the practice. This example therefore demonstrates that young children's interpretive reproduction of literacy practices within the institution of schooling could involve the negotiation of differing values, attitudes and beliefs about how literacy should be practised in the classroom. This point is further illustrated in Example 9 below, where Martin and Meena also have differing attitudes towards schooled literacy.

Example 9: Concern for adult surveillance – Martin and Meena

This final example of peer-to-peer copying is taken from a writing lesson on 06/05/2011 where the children had been asked to write the story of the 'The Enormous Turnip'[24]. Martin and Meena were seated at a table with four other children. As in the case of Donna and Jessica (above) Martin and Meena seemed to have differing attitudes to schooled literacy. In this particular lesson, Martin appeared distracted, frequently

[24] This is a European traditional tale in which a line of people and animals assemble in stages to attempt to pull an oversized root vegetable out of the ground.

engaging in conversations with other children about topics unrelated to the schooled task. Meena however maintained a focus on the task, often working co-operatively with Donna, who was seated next to her.

In Data Transcription 5.8 (below), Meena was seated on the right of the photographs, Martin on the left. Donna sat between them and although she seemed to eavesdrop on parts of their interaction she took no active part in it:

((Martin stops writing and straightens up. He seems to be looking towards Meena's book. Meena stops writing and looks towards him))

Meena: What

((Martin stretches up and makes an exaggerated action of looking into Meena's book))

Meena: Stop i::t ((Meena moves her left hand to cover her right hand, also covering her work))

((Martin glances to his right – towards where I am seated observing))- Meena follows his gaze briefly then both look back again at each other))

Martin: Anyway I'm not even copying you

20 Meena: (^^^^) ((she gives a negative
21 shake of her head, then returns
22 to her work, still covering her
23 writing. Martin begins to dab at
24 his hand with his pencil))

Data Transcription 5:8 Video recording 06/05/2011

Meena noticed that Martin was looking at her book at line (4), and challenged him, saying 'What' (6). Martin then stretched upwards and made an exaggerated show of looking into Meena's book. I believe Martin exaggerated this gesture because he was teasing Meena by pretending to copy from her work. Meena loudly refused permission for copying (10) and emphasised this by covering her work (11) and (12). Martin then glanced towards where I was seated making fieldnotes (13) – (15) and Meena followed his gaze ((15) – (16)). Their next utterances (from 19 onwards) were much quieter, suggesting that the children's realisation that an adult was observing affected their interaction. Martin explicitly denied he was copying Meena (19) and they both returned to their own activity ((20)-(24)).

This example demonstrates the in-class peer culture perception that copying should only take place when there was a low risk of adult surveillance. Once Martin noticed I was watching he ceased his pretence of copying Meena. Meena's quieter tone also suggests she was concerned about being observed participating in peer-to-peer copying. Furthermore, I suggest Martin's pretence of copying in order to tease Meena demonstrates that he was aware that she aligned more closely with the values, attitudes and beliefs of schooled literacy than he did. He was therefore able to use their differing attitudes to inform his teasing of Meena.

The nine examples above illustrate the special requirements which needed to be fulfilled in order for the shared and stable in-class peer culture literacy practice of peer-to-peer copying to be deployed in Amber Classroom. These were: i) positive peer relations should exist between both parties; ii) permission should be granted by the

child whose text was to copied; iii) justification of requests for copying and justifications of accusations of copying, from other children should be made; and iv) there should be a low risk of adult *surveillance.* Furthermore, Examples 8 and 9 show that, within Amber Class' classroom peer culture, the children were aware of their peers' differing attitudes towards school literacy and made use of this awareness in their interactions whilst engaged in schooled literacy tasks.

Next, in section 5.2, I demonstrate that Amber Class children's in-class peer culture practice of peer-to-peer copying was a particular variant on the usual classroom peer culture practices of sharing engagement with schooled literacy tasks. This value for shared engagement was not only evident in other practices of literacy within Amber Class children's in-class peer culture, but has also been documented by researchers studying young children's practices of literacy in other schooled contexts (Dyson 1987; Bourne 2002; Chen and Gregory 2004; Dyson 2006; Corsaro and Nelson 2003). However, in Amber Class' in-class peer culture, the need for special requirements to be fulfilled distinguished peer-to-peer copying from other in-class peer culture practices of shared engagement with schooled literacy tasks. I discuss this distinction in sections, 5.3 and 5.4 (below). For the moment however, I turn to a description of Amber Class' peer culture practices of sharing engagement with written texts, of which peer-to-peer copying was a special variant.

5.2 Peer-to-peer copying and Amber Class' in-class peer culture values for sharing when engaged in schooled literacy tasks

In Amber Class, the children's practice of peer-to-peer copying was informed by the value attached to sharing engagement with schooled literacy tasks within the children's classroom peer culture. Here, I describe this value with reference to three aspects of the children's interpretive reproduction of literacy practices: i) the sharing of written texts with other children (see also Chapter 4: 4.3.4); ii) co-operative working on text

production tasks; and iii) a concern for the successful completion of schooled literacy tasks by one's peers. I describe each of these below with reference to my ethnographic data. The dates refer to the date on which the data was collected.

5.2.1 Sharing written texts with other children

In Chapter 4 (4.3.4) I noted that, during a literacy lesson in November 2010, there was an in-class peer culture practice of sharing each other's written texts. There were many instances of this, ranging from brief, unsolicited glances into each other's texts during the completion of the literacy activity to explicit invitations to look at or read each other's texts. There are further instances of this in the examples of peer-to-peer copying above. In Example 2, Jessica offered her book to Donna to copy and in Example 9 Martin appeared to be glancing into Meena's book when she initially challenged him. Other examples of this practice occur throughout the data, meaning that the sharing of each other's written texts was part of the in-class peer culture practice of shared engagement with schooled literacy tasks.

5.2.2 Co-operative working on text production tasks

In Chapter 4 of this thesis I discussed how Jessica and Donna jointly produced the sentence 'I have a boyfriend' which Jessica subsequently wrote in her text (Chapter 4: 4.3.5). Other examples of co-operative working are found elsewhere in the data, often arising as a result of a request for support. Examples of this include Colin's support for Callum's sentence writing in a Read Write Inc. lesson (14/10/2010 see Fig.5.1, above); Dean and Liam working together to spell part of Dean's text (18/02/2011 see Chapter 6:6.3); and Jessica, Jane and Martin offering suggestions when Liam's pencil would not work in a writing lesson (06/05/2011).

Co-operative working could also be embedded as part of the children's overall approach to schooled literacy tasks. Examples of this include Alison and Daniella working together to read during a guided reading session (16/12/2011); Arun and

Christopher collaborating on the reading of an 'advanced' non-fiction book (21/01/2011) Rani, Charanpal and Penny checking and sharing their work in a writing lesson (07-04-2010); and Saira, Veronica and Sophia helping each other spell words during a writing activity (19-05-2011). Such examples of co-operative working show an in-class peer culture value for sharing when engaged in schooled literacy tasks which informed the children's sharing of expertise through peer-to-peer copying.

5.2.3 Concern for the successful completion of schooled literacy tasks by one's peers

Within the children's classroom peer culture, many children showed a concern for their peers' successful completion of literacy tasks. This was particularly evidenced by the children's unsolicited interventions in each other's texts when they spotted potential errors. For instance, in Example 4 (5.1.5.1 above), I described how Dean often intervened in Amina's text production process to support her successful completion of the school assigned task. Instances from elsewhere in the data include Meena looking into Amina's text before offering her a rubber to make a correction (01/04/2011); Saira intervening to correct Veronica's spelling of 'little' (19/05/2011); Jane suggesting Liam had made a mistake in his work (06/05/2011); and Meena intervening to correct an error in Donna's work (06/05/2011). Such concerns for the successful completion of schooled literacy tasks by one's peers suggest that shared engagement with schooled literacy was valued within Amber Class' peer culture.

Evidence from wider literature suggests that this value for sharing when engaged in schooled literacy tasks is not confined to the children in Amber Classroom. Other authors have found similar instances of such co-operation between children engaged in literacy tasks in schooling (cf Dyson 1987, Bourne 2002, Chen and Gregory 2004). These authors argue that social relations are an important part of such collaborative and shared work. For example, Dyson (2006) notes that, as the children in her US study (aged from 5 - 6 to 7 - 8 years) worked on literacy tasks, '…they carried on their

relationships as they engaged in their writing. They were each other's collaborators and distracters, audience members and judges…' (Dyson 2006 p.13). In addition, Corsaro and Nelson (2003) argue that children in the early stages of schooling (again in the US) are active in their literacy acquisition and that this is '…fostered by social interaction among children' (Corsaro and Nelson 2003 p.221 – 222). Thus children's co-operative work in schooled literacy tasks has been noted as a feature of their literacy practices in contexts other than that studied in this thesis. Furthermore the authors cited above view such co-operative work as a valuable part of both children's immediate literacy practices and their ongoing acquisition of literacy.

Shared engagement with schooled literacy tasks was also facilitated by Oakwood Primary School's pedagogical practices. For example the classroom tables were arranged in groups, which made it easier for the children to talk to each other, and the children were often encouraged to work collaboratively. Thus the in-class peer culture practices of shared engagement with schooled literacy tasks described in 5.2.1 – 5.2.3 (above) are not only consistent with descriptions of young children's literacy practices from other schooled contexts (Dyson 1987; Bourne 2002; Chen and Gregory 2004; Dyson 2006; Corsaro and Nelson 2003, above) they were also explicitly facilitated within the school's pedagogical practices.

However, in the institutional context of Amber Class, the special requirements for peer-to-peer copying described in 5.1 (above) distinguished this particular practice of shared engagement from those described in 5.2.1 – 5.2.3 (above). In sections 5.3 and section 5.4 of this chapter (below) I account for this distinction by describing two further aspects of the literacy practices I found in Amber Classroom. Firstly, I discuss the value schooled literacy attached to the *examination* of each child's completed texts for evidence of their *individual* literacy competence (Chapter 3: 3.1.2.3; 5.3, below). This meant that Amber Class' children had to negotiate tensions between the values the in-class peer culture attached to sharing engagement with schooled literacy tasks and the

values schooled literacy attached to the individual production of texts (5.3, below). Secondly, the children's interpretation of this schooled *examination* meant that they perceived that participating in schooled literacy tasks involved competing with their peers. This led to the children's development of special requirements to protect each child's individual ownership of particular aspects of written texts that were highly valued within schooled literacy *examinations* (5.4, below). I now turn to a description of the first of these two aspects, the schooled examination of young children's individual literacy proficiency.

5.3 The schooled value for *examining* individual engagement with schooled literacy tasks

The in-class peer culture value for sharing when engaged in schooled literacy tasks was in tension with the schooled understanding of literacy acquisition as a uniform progression by *individual* children along a pre-determined path via milestones of attainment of literacy skills and knowledge (see also Chapter 4: 4.1; 4.3.4). Within schooling, young children are required to produce individual texts in order to facilitate the schooled *examination* of their *individual* literacy competency and subsequent *ranking* according their relationship to what is considered *normal* for a child of their age (Chapter 3:3.1.2; 3.2.3; 3.2.4). Here I demonstrate how this value for individual text production was made explicit to the children in Amber Classroom in ways that affected their interpretive reproduction of the in-class peer culture literacy practice of peer-to-peer copying described in 5.1(above).

5.3.1 Limiting permitted copying to secure the *examination* of individual text production

This emphasis on individually produced texts in schooled literacy practice meant that, when copying was permitted, it was limited to individual words and phrases and restricted to adult produced texts. The pedagogical aim of copying from adult produced

texts was to expand the children's vocabularies and support the correct spelling of words. However, in Amber Classroom, this permitted copying was presented as morally dubious in that it was often referred to as 'stealing' by the teacher. For example in a writing lesson in November the teacher suggested the children '…*steal* my words if you need to…' (05/11/2010); and in April the teacher suggested that the children copy words from the shared writing, saying: '…use the spelling up here if you need to. *Steal* the spelling…' (01/04/2011). The word 'stealing' had been adopted by at least some of the children, who used it to refer to copying. For instance, in Example 1 (5.1.3 above) Veronica said 'Can I *steal* it? (the word creepy) when she requested permission to copy from Saira. This suggests that, even when copying was endorsed, a dubious aspect to the practice was understood by the children.

Furthermore, it was emphasised that, whilst copying from adult-produced texts could be helpful to the children's text production, the amount they were permitted to copy was limited. For example, in a writing lesson on instructions in April 2011, a teaching assistant rebuked a child for 'copying from the board' – that is copying from the text the class had produced with the teacher during shared writing - telling her 'You write your own instructions' (07-04-2011). Thus even when copying was permitted within schooled literacy practices, it was explicitly limited to individual words and phrases and restricted to adult produced texts. This emphasised to the children that the written texts they produced should be their 'own' work – that is – individually composed.

5.3.2 Schooled practices of *examining* individually produced written texts

The texts the children in Amber Class produced in schooled literacy lessons were subjected to ongoing *examinations*, or 'assessments', which focused on each child's individual progression in the acquisition of 'basic skills' in writing. To facilitate this the children were required to write in blue workbooks that were for their individual use only. Each schooled writing task in Amber Classroom began with the children copying the

date and the learning objective for the lesson – known as the WALT[25] – into these blue books prior to beginning their individual texts (Fig. 5.4 below):

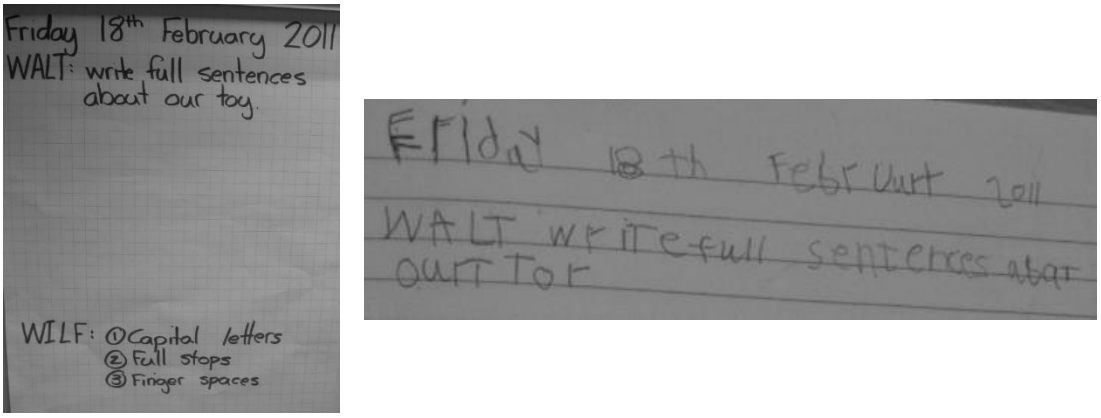


Figure 5.4 Copying the data and the WALT into a schooled writing book

The photograph on the left shows the date and WALT written on the FSWB (Free Standing White Board) by the teacher. The photograph on the right shows how Dean copied this into his writing book.

This schooled practice of requiring the children to copy the date and the WALT made the children's school writing books into one of the '…mass of documents that capture and fix… [the children as literate subjects]' (Foucault 1977 p.189). In this case each child's writing book provided an ongoing record of their progress in the acquisition of writing 'skills' throughout the year, related to the learning intention of each lesson. Each piece of written work in each *individual* child's writing book would be marked by the teacher with the intention of this feedback being read by the child who had produced the writing. For example in a lesson on 04/02/2011 the teacher stressed that part of Veronica's success in finishing her work was 'you've done all this by yourself haven't you.' This was not the only place where the emphasis on individual writing competency was made clear to the children. In Chapter 3 (3.2.3.1) I discussed how each half term the children were required to produce an *individual* piece of writing under test conditions (see below). These pieces of writing were used to *examine* the child's literacy competence.

[25] WALT is an acronym for 'We Are Learning To' and refers to the 'learning intention' of the lesson.

This value for individual text production within schooling has been noted by other authors studying classroom literacy practices (cf Heath 1983, Wohlwend 2009). Dyson in particular relates this emphasis to schooled ideologies, suggesting that:

> 'School children's apparent 'copying' of each other, officially seen as a means of avoiding 'thinking' for oneself, is a judgment undergirded by … [founded on]… an individualist ideology of composing.'
>
> [Dyson 2010 p.26]

The evidence above demonstrates that this 'individualistic ideology' (ibid) was part of the everyday experience of schooled literacy for the children in Amber Class. The outcomes of these individual *examinations* were used to *rank* children according to their writing ability (Chapter 3: 3.2.4). This *ranking* is discussed further in Chapter 6 (6.1). For the moment I describe how the value schooling attached to young children's individual literacy proficiency led to the discouragement of peer-to-peer copying.

5.3.3 The schooled discouragement of peer-to-peer copying

The emphasis on *examining* the child's written text for evidence of the individual acquisition of 'basic skills' meant that copying from another child's text was discouraged. For example, in this stretch of data from 05-11-2010, the teacher assumed that Jessica was copying from Donna's text and gently discouraged her:

```
1            ((Donna begins to write Jessica's name. Jessica
2            leans over to watch. The teacher sees this))
3  Teacher:  You're doing a marvellous job all by yourself
```

Data Transcription 5:9 Audio and video recording 05/11/2011

This discouragement of peer-to-peer copying was particularly evident during test situations, where children's literacy acquisition was formally examined (Chapter 3: 3.2.3.1). Key features of these test situations were that the children were forbidden to look at each other's work, were required to work in silence, and had to draw on their individual skills to support their work. Thus, in Amber Classroom peer-to-peer copying

was explicitly discouraged as part of the schooled emphasis on individual text production in order for the disciplinary technology of the *examination* to operate efficiently.

However, this schooled discouragement of peer-to-peer copying did not prevent the children's participation in the practice. Rather it gave rise to the children's special requirement that peer-to-peer copying take place only where there was a low risk of adult *surveillance* (Foucault 1977; Chapter 3: 3.1.2.2; 5.1.6, above). It is significant that, even amongst such young children (aged 5 - 6 years old), a risk of schooled disapproval and possible reprimand was not sufficient to force the children to abandon a valued practice of shared engagement with schooled literacy tasks, even for children like Donna, who closely aligned themselves with the values of schooled literacy (5.1.6: Example 8, above). Rather, as part of their interpretive reproduction of peer-to-peer copying, the children worked around the schooled discouragement through the development of a special requirement of a low risk of adult surveillance (5.1.6, above). In doing so the children negotiated the tension between the schooled value for *individual* text production described above, and the in-class peer culture value for *shared* engagement with texts described in 5.2.

However the development of a special requirement for a low risk of adult surveillance was not the only effect the schooled deployment of the *examination* and *ranking* had on the children's interpretive reproduction of peer-to-peer copying. Below, I argue that the children's interpretations of the schooled emphasis on examining children's individual literacy proficiency, described in 5.3.2 (above), prompted the children in Amber Class to practise literacy competitively with their peers and gave rise to the special requirements for the practice described in 5.1 (above).

5.4 Peer-to-peer copying and Amber Class' children's competitive participation in schooled literacy

In the final part of this chapter, I demonstrate that the special requirements produced by Amber Class children as part of their interpretive reproduction of the in-class peer culture practice of peer-to-peer copying were linked to their perception that participating in schooled literacy tasks involved competing with their peers. This perception was drawn from the children's interpretations of the values, attitudes and beliefs of schooled literacy, particularly those evidenced in the ongoing *examination* and subsequent *ranking* of the children (Chapter 3: 3.2.3; 3.2.4; 5.3.2, above) in Amber Classroom. This competitive participation was informed by two further interpretations the children made of their encounter with schooled literacy. These were that i) within school, features of written texts were owned by the individuals who had written them down; and ii) that linguistic features were hierarchically valued and this value was related to schooled judgments of literacy competence. I describe each of these in turn below. In these descriptions I shall return to the special requirements for peer-to-peer copying described in 5.1, above. For clarity, I remind the reader that these requirements were: i) positive social relations between children engaged in peer-to-peer copying (5.1.3, above); ii) permission to be granted by the child who's text was to be copied (5.1.4); iii) justification for requests and accusations of copying (5.1.5); and iv) a low risk of adult surveillance (5.1.6). To illustrate my point I shall add a further example, Example 10 (below) and draw further on Examples 1 - 9 (5.1, above), in particular Example 3 (5.1.4).

5.4.1 In- class peer culture perceptions of individual ownership of written texts

A distinctive feature of peer-to-peer copying in comparison to the practices of shared engagement described in 5.2 was that it involved children re-transcribing aspects from one child's written text into their own. In Amber Classroom each child's individual proficiency in writing was judged via the *examination* of their written texts (5.3.2,

above). This ongoing *examination* of children's written texts meant that, within the children's classroom peer culture, *spoken* knowledge could be freely shared whilst the sharing of *written* knowledge was subject to the special requirements described in 5.1.

This point can be illustrated with a further example from my data, Example 10 (below). It concerns a social context where negative social relations existed between two children – Jessica and Jane. In the example it is significant that both children emphasised that the disputed word 'also' had already been written down in their respective texts. However, in this instance both children had yet to write the word.

*Example 10: Laying claim to a **written** word – Jessica and Jane*

In the stretch of interaction below Jessica accused Jane of copying the word 'also' from her. Jane asserted that it was not possible for her to copy Jessica as she had already written the word 'also' in her text:

1		((Jessica lifts her head up))
2	Jessica:	Also ((Jessica turns her head to look into
3		Jane's book))
4	Jessica:	Don't steal my word ((moves her head closer to
5		Jane)) also
6		((Jane continues to write))
7		((Jane looks up at Jessica))
8	Jane:	(^^^^)
9		Already done also
10	Jessica:	((Looking towards Jane))
11		(What)
12		Why did you copy me
13	Jane:	I didn't
14		[I done
15	Jessica:	[Yes you did
16	Jane:	I done it before you
17	Jessica:	I done it before because I already wrote
18		(.)
19		also

20 ((Jessica wipes her face with her hand and then
21 watches Jane write))

Data Transcription 5:10 Video and audio recording 08/07/2011

As Jessica prepared to write the word 'also' at line (2), she told Jane not to 'steal' *her* word (4) - (5), thus denying Jane permission to copy it. In the spat that followed, both children claimed they had written the word. Jane said she 'already done…[written]… also' (9); Jessica accusing Jane of copying it from her (12); Jane claimed that she had '… done …[written].. it…[the word also]… before you… [Jessica]' (16); and Jessica repeated her claim that she had already written the word at (17). What is of interest here is that at this point in the lesson, neither child had written 'also'. However both children's accusation and refutation of copying were justified (5.1.5, above) by their insistence that the word had already been written into their own text. I argue that this writing down of the word would establish their individual ownership of it as part of their examinable text (5.3.2, above). If such individual ownership were to be successfully established, the copying child would require explicit permission (5.1.4, above) to re-transcribe the word into their own text.

In this instance the particular word the children argued about – 'also' – is significant as it relates to a further interpretation the children had made of their encounter with schooled literacy – that linguistic features were hierarchically valued and this value was related to judgments of literacy competence. I discuss this here.

5.4.2 In-class peer culture perceptions of the hierarchical value of linguistic features

I argue that the special requirements for permission (5.1.4) and justification (5.1.5) in order for peer-to-peer copying to take place were related not only to the notion of ownership of written texts described above (5.4.1), but also to an in-class peer culture perception that particular features of written texts carried hierarchical value. In Chapter 3 (3.2.2) I described the disciplinary technology of *seriation* (Foucault 1977). Foucault

described seriation in terms of schooled curricula as an 'analytic pedagogy' which '…broke down the subject being taught into its simplest elements, it hierarchized each stage of development into small steps…' (Foucault 1977 p.159). In Amber Classroom the children were familiar with both this schooled belief in the hierarchical value of particular linguistic features and its link to the *examination* of their literacy competence. I shall discuss this here with further reference to my ethnographic data.

As we saw above, Jessica and Jane's spat concerned the word 'also' (Example 10 5.4.1, above). This is significant here as, in Amber Classroom, the accurate use of such a connective was associated with an individual child being *ranked* (Chapter 3: 3.2.4) as 'higher attaining' in literacy in comparison to other children. Earlier in the writing lesson in which Example 10 occurred (08/07/2011), the children regarded as 'higher attaining' were required to include connectives such as 'also' in their finished texts. Thus, in the institutional context of Amber Classroom, it was clear to many of the children that the use of a connective such as 'also' would be an indicator that they were 'higher attaining' in relation to schooled literacy. Thus, Jessica and Jane's work in Example 10 to prove ownership of the high value connective 'also' can be connected to each child's intention to secure a higher ranking of their literacy competence than their peer.

A further example of the hierarchical value of particular features of written texts was seen in Sophia's refusal of permission for Veronica to copy the word 'awful' in Example 3 (5.1.4 above). I remind the reader that in that example it was of interest that Sophia gave permission for Veronica to copy the word 'ugly' but denied permission to copy the word 'awful'. This can now be explained in relation to the relative hierarchical value of each word within schooled literacy. In the whole class shared writing session that immediately preceded Veronica and Sophia's production of individual texts (19/05/2011), a teacher had asked the children to contribute adjectives to describe a picture of a dilapidated house. When a child suggested the word 'ugly' to describe the

house it received a lukewarm reception. However another child's proposal of the word 'awful' a few moments later was received more warmly with the teacher saying 'what a lovely word' and then asking for 'more wow words' (Audio recording 19/05/2011). Thus a hierarchical valuing of words, in which 'ugly' was of less schooled value than 'awful' was made clear to the children. In Example 3 (5.1.4) therefore, Sophia was aware that the inclusion of the 'wow' word 'awful' had the potential to secure a more favourable judgement of her literacy competence than Veronica's in schooled *examinations* of her written text. This meant that Sophia was keen to safeguard her use of the word 'awful' from copying by Veronica. Conversely, the relatively lower schooled value of the word 'ugly' meant that Sophia was happy to permit its copying by Veronica as a way of maintaining their positive relations.

In both the examples above, it is interesting to note that Jessica's eventual written use of the word 'also' and Sophia's use of the word 'awful' were noted for special attention by the teacher when she read their work. This suggests that the children's interpretations of the relative value of particular linguistic features in schooled *examinations* were accurate.

5.4.3 The in-class peer culture perception of a requirement to practise literacy competitively in institutions of schooling

I argue that the evidence presented in 5.4.1 and 5.4.2 (above) suggests that Amber Class' children's interpretations of the disciplinary technologies of the *examination*, *seriation* and *ranking* (Foucault 1977) in the institutional context of the classroom informed an in-class peer culture perception that participating in schooled literacy tasks involved competing with one's peers. This competitive participation in schooled literacy was informed by two further in-class peer culture perceptions, namely that: i) within school, features of written texts were owned by the individuals who had written them down; and ii) linguistic features were hierarchically valued and this value was related to judgments of literacy competence. This competitive participation prompted

the special requirements of positive social relations, permission and justification in the children's interpretive reproduction of an in-class peer culture practice of peer-to-peer copying (5.1. 3 – 5.1.5, above).

For example, the children's interpretation of a competitive aspect to schooled literacy accounts for the children's explicit assertion of positive relations when peer-to-peer copying took place (5.1.3: Examples 1 and 2, above). If a child was to allow another child to copy from their text it meant that the copying child had the potential to secure an equal or perhaps more advanced ranking of the other child in comparison to the child who was copied. Thus copying could only be permitted where positive relations existed. Furthermore, in Examples 3 (5.1.4, above) and 10 (5.4.1,above), Sophia and Jessica's safeguarding of 'high value' words by denying permission for Veronica and Jane to copy them would have the effect of preventing their peers from securing an equal or higher *ranking* in relation to schooled literacy than themselves. The same concern was represented in the examples where the children denied permission to copy by deliberately concealing their work from each other, thus preventing copying, as in the dispute in Example 6 (5.1.5) and Martin's copying discussion with Meena in Example 9 (5.1.6). I shall return to Amber Class' children's competitive participation in schooled literacy in Chapters 6 (6.2.4) and 7 (7.2.2). For now, I suggest that the children's perception of the need to compete with one's peers informed the special requirements of Amber Class children's in-class peer culture interpretive reproduction of a literacy practice of peer-to-peer copying.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that the practices of literacy that I found in Amber Classroom could not be separated from the institutional context in which they occurred. In particular the dominance of the values, attitudes and beliefs of schooled literacy in the social world of the classroom meant that the children's interpretive reproduction of an in-class peer culture literacy practice of peer-to-peer copying had to be especially

adapted to meet what the children considered to be the requirements for practising literacy in that institutional context. The complexity of the literacy practice of peer-to-peer copying described in this chapter demonstrates that dominant schooled discourses about the relationship between young children, literacy and schooling represent an oversimplification of that relationship. Within such discourses literacy is comprised of a series of ideologically neutral, transferrable 'basic skills' (Street 1984). The task of the school is understood to be to deploy 'best' pedagogical practices (Chapter 1: 1.1) to teach these 'basic skills' in order to bring all children within the range of what schools consider to be 'normal' literate behaviour.

However, this chapter has highlighted how a diversity of values, attitudes and beliefs about literacy affect the literacy practices that are reproduced in schools. The compulsory gathering together of a huge diversity of people in UK institutions of schooling means that those people will not necessarily share the same values, attitudes and beliefs about the schooled project that they are engaged in or the practices of literacy that such a project emphasises. Aspects of such diversity of values, attitudes and beliefs discussed in this chapter included: i) tensions between the in-class peer culture values for sharing engagement with schooled literacy tasks (5.2, above) and the schooled value for individual engagement with texts (5.3 above); and ii) in-class peer culture beliefs about schooled literacy and its expectations for children's in-school literacy practices. The latter included the in-class peer culture belief that participating in schooled literacy involved competing with one's peers for a more favourable examination of one's written text (5.4, above). The need to negotiate these diverse values, attitudes and beliefs contributed to the children's interpretive reproduction of special requirements for the literacy practice of peer-to-peer copying, in particular the need to ensure the practice took place when there was a low risk of adult *surveillance* and special requirements of positive social relations, permission and justification (5.1, above). Thus young children's interpretations of the expectations of

schooled literacy affected their interpretive reproduction of literacy practices in the social world of the classroom.

Further diversity of values, attitudes and beliefs about literacy were found between Amber Class' children. This diversity had to be carefully negotiated by children in the social interactions that were integral to their literacy practices (Chapter 4: 4.3.3). This was seen in Examples 8 and 9 (5.1.6, above) where Donna and Meena displayed greater alignment with schooled values for practising literacy than Jessica and Martin. These differences meant that Jessica had to carefully negotiate permission to copy from Donna's text, and Meena could be subjected to teasing by Martin. The analysis in this chapter therefore demonstrates that young children's encounter with schooled literacy in the social world of the classroom involves their awareness and negotiation of diverse values, attitudes and beliefs about literacy and how it should be practised. It adds a further layer of complexity to the relationship between young children, schools and literacy that is not accounted for in the dominant discourses described in Chapter 1 of this thesis (1.1).

This chapter has highlighted aspects of the complexity of young children's encounter with schooled literacy that I return to in the analysis of ethnographic data presented in the following two chapters. These are: i) the need for children to negotiate between differing values, attitudes and beliefs that co-exist in the institutional context of the classroom; ii) the children's management of the constraints that the dominance of schooled literacy discourses place on their in-school interpretive reproduction of literacy practices; iii) the effects of the children's competitive participation in schooled literacy tasks; and iv) the conditions placed on children's access to processes of shared engagement with schooled literacy tasks. In the next chapter I continue to explore these aspects of young children's encounter with schooled literacy with an account of different practices of managing relative literacy expertise that I found in my ethnographic study of Amber Classroom.

Chapter 6 Managing relative expertise in Amber Classroom

This chapter demonstrates the importance of denaturalising long-standing organisational processes and procedures of schooled institutions in order to understand their effects on the practices young children interpretively reproduce to manage their encounter with schooled literacy (Chapter 3:3.1). It does this by exploring different approaches to managing relative literacy expertise in Amber Classroom. For the purposes of this analysis, the term 'relative literacy expertise' refers to differences between children's skills and knowledge in aspects of literacy.

Within schooled literacy in England, relative literacy expertise is understood in terms of naturalised schooled notions of 'ability' and managed by 'grouping' children in terms of this 'ability' (6.1, below). The use of the Foucauldian concept of *ranking* (Foucault 1977; Chapter 3: 3.1.2.5) supports the denaturalisation of this long-standing schooled practice (Chapter 3:3.1) and shows how it is linked to judgements of young children's relationship with schooled discourses of what is considered 'normal' literate behaviour for children of particular chronological ages (Chapter 3: 3.1.2.1). In this chapter I argue that the effects of schooled *rankings* are unaccounted for in the dominant discourses of schooled literacy. I show how naturalised practices of schooled ranking inform young children's interpretive reproduction (Corsaro 2005, 2011) of social practices that enable them to manage the experience of being taught to read and write in the institution of schooling (6.2, below). This analysis demonstrates that schooled practices of ranking children according to levels of literacy expertise prompt children to i) practise literacy competitively in schooled contexts; ii) associate 'lower' literacy rankings with children's moral worth; and iii) exclude children ranked as having 'lower' levels of literacy expertise from examinable schooled literacy tasks.

However the schooled deployment of *ranking* was not the only way in which relative expertise was understood in Amber Classroom. In the final part of the chapter (6.3,

below) I show how, within the children's in-class peer culture, relative expertise could be managed as a shared resource to support the children's successful engagement with schooled literacy tasks (see also Chapter 5:5.2). This analysis shows that naturalised schooled practices of *ranking* are not necessarily the most helpful way of managing relative literacy expertise in the classroom. I conclude that the effects of long-standing organisational procedures and practices of schooling such as ranking require careful consideration in policy initiatives intended to support young children's in-school literacy acquisition.

I now begin my analysis with a description of the schooled organisation of relative expertise through the hierarchical *ranking* of children by 'ability'.

6.1 Schooled management of relative expertise through *ranking* by 'ability'

In 'Discipline and Punish' (1977) Foucault's examples of *ranking* are drawn from documentary evidence related to schools in eighteenth century Europe. He describes how schools create particular 'ranks' for their pupils. These ranks are positions or spaces where pupils can be placed to secure the efficient operation of the school. Such positions and spaces are determined by factors such as the children's age, their performance in examinations or their behaviour in the classroom (Foucault 1977 p.147). Thus the categories within schools to which the children can be assigned are pre-determined by the educational institution and fixed, whilst the subject moves between them. As Foucault says:

> 'It is a perpetual movement in which individuals replace one another in a space marked off in aligned intervals.'
>
> [Foucault 1977 p.147]

In schools, *ranking* depends on the categories or classifications of pupils drawn from the processes of normalising judgement described in Chapter 3 (3.1.2.1). Within schools a notion of 'normal', often referred to as a 'standard' is established and ranks are allotted according to differing 'intervals' (Foucault ibid) within the range of this 'normal'. This means that the diverse mass of children entering schooling each year can be organised by assignation to a 'rank'. Although they may move between these pre-determined ranks at different points in their schooled careers, they always occupy a rank.

6.1.1 *Ranking* by 'ability' in UK primary schools

Stephen Ball (2013) draws on Foucault's theorisation of disciplinary technologies to argue that the history of schooling in the UK can be seen as a 'History of Classifications' (Ball 2013 p.45). He provides a useful description of how *ranking* in UK schools is linked to the notion of 'ability' and 'ability' is strongly linked to the notion of the 'normal':

> 'In school, normalisation is most evident and familiar as a distribution of ability and as a concomitant typology of rank positions. In a number of ways we find ability, as an effect or articulation of the norm, produced at the heart of schooling, the very point at which teaching could articulate a form of knowledge which related pedagogy to population, and classroom practice to a general theory of management, distribution and entitlement.'
>
> [Ball 2013 p.51]

In terms of literacy, this 'distribution of ability' (Ball, ibid) is managed according to the dominant discourses of literacy discussed in Chapter 3 (3.1; see also Chapter 1:1.1). Thus, within schooling, relative literacy expertise is understood in relation to a notion of 'ability' that is managed, from a Foucauldian point of view, by organising children into categories or ranks according to their relationship to what is considered to be 'normal' acquisition of literacy skills. (Chapter 3: 3.1.2.5). Whilst they can move between ranks, those ranks will be pre-determined and, once assigned to a particular rank, the child

receives particular teaching and resources for literacy learning that are considered appropriate for a child at that stage in their acquisition of literacy skills (Chapter 3: 3.2.4).

I now draw on policy documents that were current at the time I collected my data to consider the schooled values, attitudes and beliefs about *ranking* that informed its deployment in the organisation of schooled literacy. For clarification, I note here that, within the dominant discourses of schooled literacy at that time, children's levels of literacy expertise or competence could be referred to in terms of 'ability' or 'attainment' and *ranking* was most commonly referred to as 'grouping'.

6.1.2 Schooled values attitudes and beliefs about *ranking* in terms of literacy expertise

At the time I collected my data, the technology of *ranking* was viewed within schooling as a valuable way of supporting children in their literacy learning. This can be seen in an extract from a Primary National Strategies booklet entitled 'Improving Writing with a Focus on Guided Writing' (DCSF 2007). 'Guided Writing' was a method of teaching writing that relied on grouping children by relative literacy expertise in order to match their 'learning needs', as this extract from the booklet demonstrates:

- 'Effective teaching of writing begins with assessment and the identification of the learning needs of the class.
- Using this information and other relevant information, the teacher then groups the children with similar needs…
- …The groups should be flexible to enable each child to achieve success…'

[DCSF 2007 p.12]

Thus 'effective' teaching (DCSF ibid) was understood to begin with the *examination* of each child's competence at writing. The outcomes of this examination informed the grouping of children according to what they were perceived as needing to learn in order to progress along a universal pathway of literacy acquisition (Chapter 3:3.2.2, 3.2.3;

3.2.4). The effective deployment of this *ranking* or 'grouping' was seen as a key strategy for 'narrowing the gaps' (DCSF 2009) between the achievement in schools of pupils understood to be 'advantaged' or 'disadvantaged' in terms of their encounter with schooling, an educational outcome much desired by UK policy makers. The *ranking* of children was seen as:

> '…tailoring learning experiences to children's needs, for example through the use of group or one-to-one work…'
>
> [DCSF 2009 p.28]

These extracts demonstrate that schooled literacy practices at the time I collected my data were informed by a belief that *ranking*, understood within schooled literacy as 'grouping,' was a valuable teaching strategy. It was viewed as an effective method of 'tailoring' children's learning and enabled the 'effective' focus of teaching for children, based on a clear assessment, or *examination*, of their 'learning needs'. Grouping, or in this thesis, *ranking,* children in this way was understood to support children in achieving 'success' in literacy. I now demonstrate how the ranking of children in terms of their relative literacy expertise was made explicit to the children in Amber Classroom.

6.1.3 The explicit schooled ranking of children by relative literacy expertise

In Chapter 3 (3.2.4) I described how the disciplinary technology of *ranking* was deployed in Amber Classroom. Here I build on this description to show how this schooled practice of *ranking* children by the outcomes of ongoing examinations of their literacy expertise was an explicit part of Amber Class' children's encounter with schooled literacy. I describe how schooled *rankings* of children according to their examined levels of literacy expertise were made explicit to the children through: i) the assignment of children to different bands of reading books; ii) the displays of groupings in the Amber Classroom environment; iii) the allusions to specific rankings in setting

schooled expectations for children's engagement with schooled literacy tasks. I discuss each of these in turn here.

6.1.3.1 The assignment of children to different 'bands' of reading books

In Chapter 3 (3.2.2) I explained how certain reading books in Amber Classroom were *seriated* into bands according to their level of 'difficulty'. The organisation of these books, from those considered the 'simplest' to the more 'difficult', was in accordance with the schooled organisation of the literacy curriculum into a hierarchy of skills and knowledge to be acquired by particular ages (Chapter 3: 3.2.2). These books were stored in boxes with their Book Band number (in Amber Classroom from Band 1 - the 'simplest' - to Band 8 – the most 'difficult') displayed on the front of the box. Children were assigned to particular 'Book Bands'[26] in their choice of books to take home. Each child was expected to select a book to take home and read from the appropriate box and so was made aware of which band they were judged to be reading within. Fig 6.1 (below) shows the A4 sheet of paper that was tacked to the window behind these Book Band boxes. On this sheet, each child's name was written under the 'Book Band' they were judged to be reading within (in this case the names have been blurred for ethical reasons):

[26] The term 'Book Band' refers to a system for grading books used in many English primary schools found in Baker, Bickler and Bodman (2007)

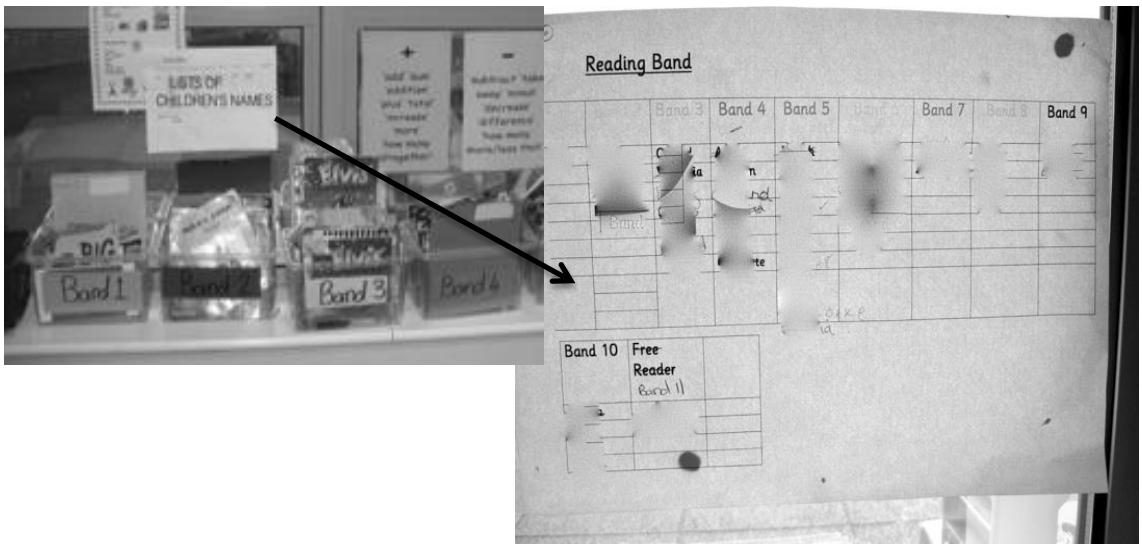


Figure 6.1 The children's *ranking* according to 'book band' on the classroom window.
The picture on the left shows where the 'list of children's names' was positioned on the window. The picture on the left shows the list in close-up. Band 1is too faint to be distinguished but is the heading for the list of names on the top- left of the list. It indicates the 'lower' ranks, Band 10 and 'free reader', the heading on the bottom left of the list, indicates the 'higher' ranks. The names have been blurred for ethical reasons.

This organisation of the children's names beneath the relevant 'Book Band' can be seen as a form of *ranking* according to reading expertise. The children progressed from band to band according to ongoing *examinations* of their reading competence. Whilst children moved between bands in accordance with the notion of 'flexible' grouping (DCSF 2007, above) they always occupied a pre-determined book band (see 6.1.1, above).

6.1.3.2 Displays of groupings in Amber Classroom environment

The children's *rankings* according to their relative literacy expertise were clearly displayed in the classroom (Chapter 3: 3.2.4). Fig 6.2 (below) shows the children's groupings for reading teaching that were tacked on the large double doors between Amber Classroom and the class next door:

Figure 6.2 Amber Class' children's guided reading groups
These were displayed on the double doors between Amber Classroom and the adjoining classroom. The children's names have been blurred for ethical reasons.

From my ethnographic data, it appears that the display in Fig. 6.2 was organised hierarchically from left to right according to each groups' relationship to the schooled notion of 'normal' rates of acquisition of literacy skills. Each rank or group was assigned a name, in this case the name of a fruit.[27] Thus 'Bananas' group contained the children ranked as 'lower' in terms of their relationship to the schooled 'norm' of literacy acquisition and 'Pineapples' those ranked as 'higher'. The children's names were written around the group name on 'write - on wipe - off' card to secure the 'flexibility' of grouping suggested in policy recommendations (DCSF 2007: 6.1.2 above).This meant that the children could be easily moved between groups according to ongoing examinations of their reading expertise.

Figures 6.1 and 6.2 show that the schooled *ranking* of children into particular groups according to areas of literacy expertise was clearly displayed in the classroom. In this

[27] The group names were often chosen by the class teacher and have no particular significance other than to identify each group.

way the children's relationship to the 'norm' of literacy acquisition, was displayed at the heart of Amber Classroom (cf Ball 2013; 6.1.2, above).

6.1.3.3 Allusions to ranks of literacy competence in schooled expectations

The *ranking* of children according to their relative literacy expertise was also alluded to by adults as the children engaged in literacy tasks. For example at the beginning of writing lessons the teacher would often tell each *rank*, or group what they were to do, as this extract from my fieldnotes shows:

> 'The teacher starts going through the targets for each ability group of writers to meet in their writing. … Awesome Apples[28] are to write in full sentences with capital letters and full stops, another group is to use connectives and so on.'
>
> [Fieldnotes 21/01/2011]

These differences in expectations were informed by the *seriation* of literacy into a hierarchy of skills to be acquired by particular ages described in Chapter 3 (3.2.2).

In another example from a writing lesson on 18/02/2015, the teacher made it clear to the children that the number of sentences they were expected to write depended on their membership of a particular writing group. The 'higher' ranking group, the 'Awesome Apples' were expected to write seven or eight sentences whilst four to five sentences were expected from the relatively 'lower' ranking 'Magnets' group. From the beginning of the summer term, the children's third and last term in Year 1, these differing expectations for writing, known in the class as the WILF[29] were written on card and placed on the tables where differently ranked groups of children were directed to sit when they engaged in schooled writing tasks. Fig. 6.3 (below) shows Jessica reading the expectations for her writing group (writing lesson 06/05/11):

[28] The 'Awesome Apples' were the children ranked as 'higher' in terms of their writing 'ability'.

[29] 'What I'm Looking For' - or what the teacher would consider to be evidence of successful completion of the task this is usually accompanied by a 'WALT' – 'We Are Learning To' (Chapter 3:3.2.2).

Figure 6.3 Jessica (bottom right) reads the expectation for her rank's engagement with the schooled literacy task.
On the top left of the picture, the teacher is reminding the children to read the expectations, or 'WILF' for their group.

These examples show how schooled perceptions of relative literacy expertise in terms of judgements of literacy 'ability' as an '…effect or articulation of the norm…' (Ball 2013 p.73) were clearly visible to the children in Amber Classroom. The children were grouped, or *ranked*, according to the outcomes of ongoing examinations of their literacy competence. These rankings were clearly displayed to the children and affected both the resources they had access to and the expectations for their completion of schooled literacy tasks. Furthermore, these groupings affected the children's physical distribution around the classroom. For example in Fig. 6.3 (above) Jessica was seated at the same table as other children *ranked* as having the same level of expertise in writing as identified through schooled examinations of her literacy competence (see also Chapter 3: 3.2.4 and Chapter 4: 4.1.3).

This evidence shows that the schooled deployment of *ranking* to manage literacy expertise was a feature of Amber Class' children's encounter with schooled literacy in

the social context of the classroom. Within schooled literacy it was viewed as a valuable method of enabling the 'effective' focus of literacy teaching for young children, based on a clear assessment, or *examination*, of their 'learning needs'. In the analysis above, the use of Foucault's term *ranking* has shown how this naturalised practice allows children to be organised according schooled notions of what is considered normal literate behaviour for their chronological age (Chapter 3:3.1.2.1). However, in order to critically appraise the effects of this dominant practice, it is helpful to consider how it is interpreted by the young children who encounter it as part of their daily engagement with literacy in school. Below I demonstrate how the adoption of the ethnographic approach to research demanded by an LSP perspective (Chapter 2: 2.1) supported by Corsaro's theorisation of young children's socialisation as 'interpretive reproduction' supports such an aim.

6.2 Schooled *rankings* in Amber Class' children's in-class peer culture

In this section, I draw on my ethnographic data to discuss how Amber Class' children interpreted the schooled practice of *ranking* them according to their relative literacy expertise. These interpretations were incorporated into their interpretive reproduction (Corsaro 2005, 2011) of social practices that enabled them to manage their encounter with schooled literacy. The section moves a little beyond a specific discussion of the children's interpretive reproduction of *literacy* practices (Street 1984) to discuss their interpretive reproduction of more general *social* practices in relation to schooled literacy. I present an analysis of my ethnographic data that demonstrates that Amber Class' children: i) were confused as to the purpose of their *rankings* in terms of schooled literacy; ii) placed importance on occupying higher *rankings* within their classroom peer culture; iii) interpretively reproduced schooled *rankings* as part of their competitive participation in schooled literacy activities; iv) associated their own and other children's positions in the schooled *rankings* with evaluations of their moral worth;

and v) excluded children *ranked* as having 'lower' levels of literacy expertise from schooled literacy tasks that had an examinable outcome. I shall exemplify each of these points with examples from my data, but begin with a reminder of how Corsaro suggests young children manage confusion through the processes of interpretive reproduction (Corsaro 1988).

6.2.1 Young children's peer cultures and the management of confusion

In Chapter 1 I discussed how Corsaro's theorisation of children's engagement with the social world as interpretive reproduction offers a way of understanding how young children manage confusions arising from that engagement in their reproduction of peer culture routines (Chapter 1: 1.4.1.3; 1.4.1.4). Here I return to this aspect of interpretive reproduction as it has implications for understanding young children's interpretations of schooled systems of *ranking* by literacy expertise.

Corsaro notes that peer culture routines are a way for young children to manage confusions arising from adult interactions. He suggests that:

> 'Often, especially in adult-child interactions, children are exposed to social knowledge they do not fully grasp. However, interaction normally continues in an orderly fashion, and ambiguities are often left to be pursued over the course of children's interactive experiences'
>
> [Corsaro 1988 p.2]

From this perspective, any confusion children may experience about the purpose of disciplinary technologies such as schooled literacy *rankings* would lead to their engagement in interactive work to resolve this confusion through the interpretive reproduction of peer culture routines. Such routines would not disrupt the 'orderly' (Corsaro, ibid) running of schooled literacy lessons, and thus may not prompt further reflection by adults supporting young children's literacy acquisition. However in the analysis below the differences between schooled and Amber Class' in-class peer culture interpretations of the schooled deployment of *ranking* to manage differences in

children's literacy expertise can be seen as a point of confusion. These differences were not anticipated in dominant schooled interpretations of literacy, but did have significant effects on the children's in-school literacy practices as I describe here.

6.2.2 Amber Class in-class peer culture confusion about schooled *rankings* for literacy

The children in Amber Class were aware of schooled practices of *ranking* or grouping according to relative literacy expertise. They showed understanding not only of their own membership of particular groups, but also of that of their peers. For example, in a writing lesson in January Ben gave out the writing books for his group, calling the children to his table (Fieldnotes 21/01/2011). In February 2011, India explained that she and Daniella had been moved to 'Oranges' group for reading (see Fig. 6.2) - the group for children ranked as second 'highest' in terms of reading - whilst another child, Alison, had been placed in a different group (Fieldnotes 10/02/2011). However there is evidence that the children were confused as to the purposes of these groups, as the data example below demonstrates.

Example 1 – Confusion as to the purpose of the groups

The children were not always sure of the significance of their groups. In section 6.1.3.3 of this chapter, I described the beginning of a writing lesson on 18/02/2011 when the teacher told each group the amount of writing that was expected of them. However Data Transcription 6.1 (below) shows that Donna, Dean and Jane had confused their writing grouping with the Book Band they were reading within. This meant that they associated the schooled expected outcomes for the writing task with the Book Band level to which they were assigned. The recording is not very clear as there are two conversations about the same topic going on, one between Donna and a second (unidentified) child and another between Dean and Jane, but I have transcribed it thus:

1 Donna: [I'm not in your group
2 Dean: [I have to write more
3 ['cos I write 2 when I'm in band 2
4 Donna: [I got to (^^^three) so that means
5 (I ask the teacher)
6 [if I can do] more instead
7 Dean: [You're in band one are you]
8 Jane: And I'm two

Data Transcription 6:1 Audio Recording 18/02/2011

In this stretch of data, Dean and Jane seemed to take the Book Band they were reading within (6.1.3.1, above) as an indicator of their schooled literacy *ranking*. Dean appeared to place himself *in* Band 2 at line 3 and Jane seemed to equate it with her identity, saying 'I'm two' (8). However, the children seem confused as to the significance of these Book Band *rankings*, relating them to the amount of writing they were expected to produce. Dean assumed he had to 'write 2 (lines)' because he is in 'band 2' (3) and Donna appeared to assume she had to write more because she 'got to (^^^) 3'.

Such confusion as to the purposes of these ranks means that it cannot be assumed that schooled interpretations of the purposes of ranking children according to 'learning need' (DSCF 2007; 6.1.2, above) are shared by the children. Below, I present examples from my data that demonstrate that the children's interpretations of these rankings, or groupings, included a perception of the desirability of belonging to a 'higher' group or rank. This perception informed the children's competitive participation in schooled literacy tasks (Chapter 5: 5.4; and 6.2.3 and 6.2.4, below).

6.2.3 The importance of occupying higher schooled literacy *ranks* within the in-class peer culture

The children's interpretations of the schooled practice of *ranking* by literacy expertise included a perception that it was desirable to occupy 'higher' ranks. The examples

below concern children's interpretations of their 'Book Band' level (Baker, Bidler and Bodman 2007). The banding of reading books in Amber Classroom was intended to ensure that the children's reading matter matched their level of reading expertise (6.1.3.1, above) and thus were 'tailored' to their 'learning needs' (DCSF 2009, above). However, within the children's classroom peer culture occupying a relatively 'higher' Book Band level was viewed as important and the children were keen to defend their occupation of such 'higher' ranks.

Example 2 – Ranking by 'Book Band' level

The first example is drawn from a video interview I conducted with three children – Christopher, Jessica and Veronica (01/04/2011). The three children showed me the boxes of books by the classroom window (Fig 6.1, above) and explained the hierarchical organisation of the Bands, *ranking* them from 'easy' to 'hard'. Christopher explained that after Band 11 'you are a free reader…' going on to say that this meant '…you one of the *best* readers.' (Video interview 01/04/2011; see also Chapter 3; 3.2.2). Later, when Christopher said he was in Band 8, Veronica said 'That's good', suggesting she was impressed with the higher level. Christopher also expressed a wish to read within 'higher' Book Band levels, saying, 'I wish I could be Year 2 and read all the other bands'.

The importance to the children of reading within higher Book Band levels was also suggested when the children began to show me the books that they had read. Jessica and Veronica got a book out of the Band 8 box which both claimed to have read before. Data Transcription 6:2 (below) shows how to prove this Veronica fetched her reading record[30] from her classroom drawer[31] and sought out the specific entry where her reading of the book was recorded:

[30] As in many UK schools, the children in Amber Class were required to take home a Book Band book from school at regular intervals to read at home with an adult. These books were accompanied by a home/school reading record which parents and teachers completed with the date, the name of the book read, and a brief comment about how the child had read the book.

1		Veronica is flicking through her reading record
2	Veronica:	I had this one *((she is referring to the book))*
3	Lucy:	Did you just get that out of your drawer
4	Veronica:	Yeah ((She continues turning the pages of her reading
5		record))
6		Let me show you where is it
7		I have had it
8		I have had it

Data Transcription 6:2 Video Interview Veronica, Christopher and Jessica 01/04/2011

When Veronica found the entry she was looking for, she showed me, holding it up for the camera when I asked and saying with some pride 'And I did it.' (Fig. 6.4, below)

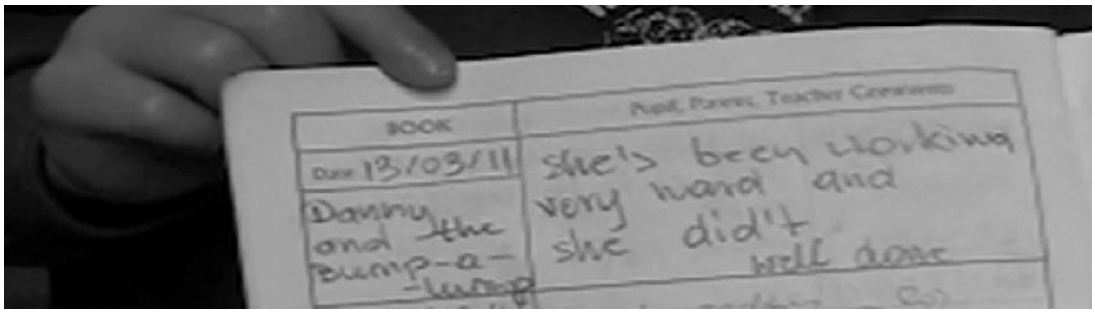


Figure 6.4 Veronica shows me the page in her reading record

It is of interest here that Veronica felt she needed to prove that she had read a book found in the Band 8 box by drawing on one of the school's official reading records. This suggests that, for Veronica, her relatively 'higher' *ranking* in terms of Book Band levels required official authentication in order to be accepted. I shall return to this point below in terms of Jessica's participation in a reading activity involving banded books (Example 4).

Example 3 – The desirability of progressing to a 'higher' book band level

Another example of the desirability of progressing to 'higher' Book Band levels is found in my fieldnotes from November 2011. During a whole class discussion, the children

[31] Each child in Amber Class had a drawer or 'tray' for storing personal items in the classroom

were asked to think of one thing they had done really well at school that they could share with the rest of the class. Three of the children talked about how they were 'trying hard' in terms of progressing through the schooled *ranking* of reading books. Charanpal said 'I try harder to read Band 5' and Saira said 'Yesterday I moved up my Book Band' (Fieldnotes 25/11/10). Thus, progressing to higher 'Book Band' levels was viewed as an indicator of 'doing well' in schooled literacy.

Example 4 – Defending the occupation of a 'higher' book band level

In another instance, during a group reading lesson in June 2011, Jessica objected strongly to the banded book she was given to read on the grounds that it was 'too easy':

> During the guided reading session … Jessica objects to the book being 'too easy'. She says that it is an easy band five whilst she is on band six.
>
> [Fieldnotes 16-06-2011]

Jessica seemed to resent being offered a book from a 'lower' Book Band and expressed unwillingness to read it. I note that this evidence aligns with that of Veronica proving her Book Band level by fetching her reading record (Data Transcription 6.2, above). Both Veronica and Jessica were keen to defend their Book Band *ranking*. Veronica did so by seeking out evidence to prove which book she had read, and Jessica refused to read a book she considered to be below her *ranking*. Both these examples suggest that, within the children's in-class peer culture, *ranking* in terms of Book Band level required defence.

These instances suggest that the children interpreted their assignment to a particular level of banded reading book as an indicator of hierarchical *ranking* in relation to reading expertise, placed value on occupying 'higher' Book Band ranks and worked to defend their relative *ranking* in their social interactions concerning their occupation of Book Bands. This suggests that the children were eager to avoid occupying 'lower'

ranks in terms of schooled literacy. The descriptions in 6.2.4 – 6.2.6 inclusive (below) offer some insights into the undesirable consequences of children's occupation of a lower rank in relation to schooled literacy. The first of these comprises a description of the children's comparison of spelling test scores (6.2.4, below) and links to the children's competitive participation in schooled literacy tasks described in Chapter 5 (5.4).

6.2.4 The interpretive reproduction of competitive *ranking* in relation to spelling test scores

In Chapter 5 (5.4), I described how the children's interpretations of the schooled deployment of the *examination* and *ranking* prompted competitive participation in schooled literacy tasks. In this section of the chapter, I return to the theme of competition to show how Amber Class children used the outcomes of their weekly spelling test to inform their competitive participation in schooled literacy. This involved the interpretive reproduction of practices of *ranking* each other according to spelling score. For some children, this competition had the effect of prompting them to work hard to attain higher scores in spelling tests. However for those children who regularly attained lower scores, the effects of this *ranking* had unwelcome consequences, as I shall describe below.

Each week, the children in Year 1 were set a list of spellings to learn[32]. On Thursday mornings they would be tested on these spellings. The test was marked by the teacher and a mark out of ten was given (see also Chapter 3: 3.2.3.1). The school rewarded higher test scores with treats such as sweets or stickers. Thus the children valued higher marks in these spelling tests. Here, I describe how this value for higher spelling test marks was used within the children's in-class peer culture to inform competitive participation in schooled literacy.

[32] These tests were set within the children's phonics groups - see Chapter 3: 3.2.4.1

Example 5: The value of high spelling scores within the classroom peer culture

This example shows the importance of higher spelling test scores within the in-class peer culture. In an interview in February 2011 Bertha, Colin and Martin discussed the importance of getting high scores in the weekly spelling test (Video interview 10/02/2011). Bertha searched through her spelling book to find instances where she had scored ten out of ten. When asked what such high scores meant, Bertha explained 'That means I got (better) and I get gooder and gooder for my spellings'. Later in the same interview she said that she 'loves' her spelling book because of her high scores.

Further examples of the importance of high scores in spelling tests are found elsewhere in the data. At the end of a spelling test in November 2011, Donna, Jane and Martin discussed their spelling test scores with a child from another class. During this discussion Jane showed the children a test in her book where she scored the highest available mark - ten out of ten - and different children expressed a wish to attain such high scores (Audio recording 25/11/2010). At the beginning of a spelling test in May 2011 Alison and Jessica were heard boasting about how they would get ten out of ten, (Audio recording 19-05-2011). Thus Amber Class children placed value on attaining higher spelling scores and were willing to produce evidence to defend those high scores.

Example 6 – Misrepresenting high spelling scores

The desirability of high spelling scores led some children to misrepresent their score to their peers. This example is drawn from the same interview from February 2011 discussed in Example 5 (above). When Bertha presented evidence of her high spelling scores, both Colin and Martin (who did not bring their spelling books to the interview) asserted that they also attained high scores. Colin said that he achieved 'nine out of eleven' and Martin said he got 'twelve out of ten' in spelling tests. Both of these scores were impossible, given that the maximum mark for a schooled spelling test was 10. There is further evidence of children misrepresenting spelling scores in a lesson from

December 2010. There, Dean told a child from another class that he had scored eight out of ten in a test, when he really scored five out of ten (Fieldnotes 09-12-10).

These examples demonstrate that: i) the children were keen to score highly in spelling tests; ii) they often felt compelled to produce evidence to illustrate their higher scores and iii) they were prepared to misrepresent their scores to suggest a higher score than they had actually achieved. I note that Jane and Bertha's production of evidence to defend their assertions of high spelling test scores is a further indication that the higher *rankings* afforded by spelling scores and Book Band level required careful defence (see also 6.2.3, above). However, for some children, attaining lower scores in these spelling tests presented them with particular difficulties, as the following examples show.

Example 7: Unfavourable comparisons of spelling scores

The importance the children assigned to their weekly spelling scores had unwelcome consequences for those children who struggled to attain higher scores in the test as this example demonstrates.

Each week a teacher would mark the children's spelling test and tell each child their score as she returned their spelling book. This could mean the scores were given publicly, in front of the rest of the children. In one such public announcement of scores, Martin scored only one out of ten in his test (19/05/2011). This announcement led to a general discussion of the score amongst the other children in his spelling group, demonstrating that such a score was something of note within the children's in-school peer culture. It also prompted some children (Jessica, Martin and Liam) to engage in interactive work to rank themselves in relation to spelling score. I begin with an account from my fieldnotes of the children's reaction to Martin's low spelling score:

> ‘The children on the carpet begin to discuss Martin’s score. I hear several refer to it. Martin continues to choose his sticker for remembering his book – he does not appear to react to the score at all, he and Jessica begin discussing the stickers again. Jessica tells Martin that he has one sticker whilst she has two.’
>
> [Fieldnotes 19-05-2011]

Jessica’s response to Martin’s score was to emphasise that she got two stickers for spelling (one for remembering her spelling book and one for scoring ten out of ten) whilst Martin only got one (for remembering his spelling book). A few moments later, Liam’s score was read out. He scored only three out of ten:

> ‘The teacher asks him…[Liam]… if he tried to learn his spellings. When she moves on to mark another book, Liam crawls around the edge of the carpet and says to Martin ‘Martin, at least I got more than you.’ Martin appears unconcerned.’
>
> [Fieldnotes 19-05-2011]

In this example, Jessica and Liam responded to Martin’s test score in a way that emphasised their relatively higher attainment in the spelling test in comparison with Martin. Jessica did this with reference to her two stickers in comparison to Martin’s one; and Liam by his explicit comparison of his and Martin’s score. The importance of attaining higher scores in relation to other children was particularly demonstrated by Liam’s remark to Martin – ‘at least I got more than you’. Here, Liam’s use of the phrase ‘at least’ demonstrates that, although he was not pleased with his score, it placed him ‘higher’ in the *rankings* of schooled literacy expertise than Martin. From Liam’s point of view then, there was something to be salvaged from the situation.

These instances show how the children’s perception that participating in schooled literacy tasks involved competing with one’s peers (Chapter 5: 5.4) led them to rank each other according to their spelling test scores. An important consideration here is the potential effects of persistently occupying lower *rankings*, as my data shows both Liam and Martin experienced, on young children’s developing literate identities. In the next section of the chapter, I develop this point through the presentation of evidence

that at least some of the children in Amber Classroom had begun to associate their *rankings* in relation to schooled literacy with their literate identities – in particular with conceptions of their moral worth.

6.2.5 Amber Class in-class peer culture association of *ranking* with moral worth

Evidence from my data suggests that, within Amber Class and wider Year 1 peer culture, the children associated *ranking* within schooled literacy with their moral worth. I use the term 'moral worth' to describe how the children associated their literacy *ranking* with the extent to which they could be considered to have behaved 'well', or 'properly'. The evidence below suggests that within Amber Class' children's classroom peer culture, there was a perception that children who occupied lower *rankings* in terms of schooled literacy could be assumed to have done something 'wrong' or 'improper' (see also Ladson-Billings, 2005). The following data examples illustrate this.

Example 8 – Not getting it in their heads

All the children in Year 1 were distributed into groups for phonics teaching three or four times a week. Membership of these phonic groups was based on the regular *examination* of the children's knowledge of phonics and their skills of applying this knowledge to reading and spelling words (Chapter 3: 3.2.3.1). Each time these assessments were carried out, the membership of each phonics group would change. The intention of these practices of *examination* and *ranking* was to ensure that the skills and knowledge taught in each of the phonics groups were tailored to the children's 'learning needs' (DCSF 2007, 6.2.3 above).

However, within Amber Class in-class peer culture there was evidence that the children interpreted these groupings, or to use Foucault's terminology, *rankings* for phonics teaching (Foucault 1977), as being linked to their moral worth. For example in early November 2010, I interviewed three children about the school's approach to phonics teaching. Colin was from Amber Class and Octavia and Fouzia were from other

classes in Year 1. Data Transcription 6.3 (below) demonstrates that each child associated movement between phonics groups with moral worth. During the interview, I (Lucy) asked the children why they had moved group:

1	Lucy:	Why have you gone to a different one? *((phonics group))*
2	Colin:	Because of doing good learning
3	Lucy:	Why doesn't everybody just stay in their classrooms for
4		Read Write Inc?
5	Colin:	Because they don't learn properly
6	Lucy:	Who doesn't learn properly
7	Octavia:	I want to say something
8	Fouzia:	Because they doesn't work properly and lots of people
9		doesn't. Only us three are changing
10	Octavia:	We just changed our classroom because we are clever
11	Lucy:	So, hold on, what about the children who aren't in your
12		Read Write Inc group. Why are they in different groups?
13	Fouzia:	Because they're not so good, they don't get it in their
14		heads, so that's why they're in the lower groups

Data Transcription 6:3 Audio interview 08/11/10

At line (2) Colin attributed his *ranking* in phonics to his 'good' learning. He added that other children in Year 1 couldn't stay in their own classrooms for phonics teaching because they 'don't learn properly' (5). This idea was supported by Fouzia who suggested that lots of children didn't work 'properly' (8). Fouzia then said that those children (who did not move phonics groups) were not so 'good,' which is why they were in the 'lower' groups (13) - (14). Here, the children's use of words such as 'proper' and 'good' suggest that the children interpreted schooled *rankings* for phonics teaching as firstly being hierarchical and secondly being related to their moral worth.

Example 9 – 'Trying hard' and 'botching up'

A further example of the association of literacy *rankings* with moral worth is found in a discussion with Donna during a literacy lesson in December 2010. There, Donna compared her and Jessica's movement through the phonics groups. Donna explained 'We (Donna and other children) went to that (phonics) group because we tried harder

and Jessica stayed in this group because she didn't try hard enough' (Fieldnotes 09-12-2010). An example of the attribution of *ranking* to moral worth from outside of the school's ranking for phonics comes from Martin's explanation of his relatively low spelling scores (6.2.4, above). When I asked Martin about one of his low spelling test scores, Martin said that he achieved lower scores because he 'botched up' (Fieldnotes 12-05-2011). His use of this term suggests that he attributed his low score to a personal failure to behave as expected.

These examples suggest that at least some children in Amber Class (and more generally in Year 1) associated the school's *ranking* in terms of literacy with a child's moral worth. This worth is evidenced by 'trying hard', 'learning 'good' and learning 'properly' rather than 'botching up' or failing to 'get it in their heads'. I suggest that this demonstrates that, within the children's in-class peer culture, at least some children associated their relative *rankings* in relation to schooled literacy competence with their moral worth. This evidence suggests that there is a need for more careful scrutiny of the potential long-term effects of the children's interpretation of occupying relatively 'lower' schooled literacy *rankings* on their perceptions of their own and other children's developing literate identities. Furthermore, my data suggests that occupying relatively lower *rankings* in relation to schooled literacy could also affect the children's access to shared engagement with schooled literacy tasks. I illustrate this with examples from my data below.

6.2.6 Excluding children *ranked* as 'lower attaining' from participation in examinable schooled literacy tasks

Here, I present data examples that suggest that the children's concern for securing positive outcomes in schooled *examinations* of their literacy competence meant that children ranked as having 'lower' levels of literacy expertise could be excluded from participation in shared schooled literacy tasks which had an *examinable* outcome (Chapter 3: 3.2.3). I remind the reader that young children's written texts were subject

to ongoing *examinations* or 'assessments', which focused on each child's progression in the acquisition of 'basic skills' in writing (Chapter 5: 5.3.2). The children's concern to secure favourable outcomes in *examinations* of their written texts mean that, where such texts were required to be jointly produced by more than one child, children ranked as having 'lower' levels of literacy expertise could be excluded from the activity. This point is illustrated by the examples below.

Example 10: Excluding children with relatively less literacy expertise from the joint production of written texts

In this example, from a literacy lesson in February 2011, Daniella and Rani excluded a child with relatively less literacy expertise, Karen, from participating in a shared schooled writing task. I believe Karen was excluded because Daniella and Rani judged that her potential contribution would not secure a favourable outcome to the schooled examination of their jointly produced written text. Daniella was in the writing group ranked as the highest 'ability' (known as the 'Awesome Apples) and Rani occupied the second ranked writing group, (known as the 'Alligators'). However Karen, new to schooling in England, was in the early stages of learning English and at that time had elected not to speak whilst in school. In terms of schooled *examinations* of her literacy expertise she was therefore ranked much 'lower' than both Daniella and Rani. It is important to note that Karen was only excluded from the *examinable* task. In other aspects of the children's group participation, and in tasks that did not involve jointly producing examinable texts, Rani in particular worked to ensure Karen was included in schooled activities.

There is some video of the children beginning this group work (10/02/2011). At first, Rani in particular seemed to work to include Karen. She took Karen's hand and led her to the table where the group would work. Before commencing the written task, Rani used gestures and speech to attempt to engage with Karen. However once work on the joint production of the *examinable* written text began, Rani and Daniella made no

further attempt to include Karen in their shared engagement with the task. This was particularly evident in Fig. 6.5, below, and the fieldnote extract that accompanies it.

Figure 6.5 Rani and Daniella discuss the task in hand
Karen (bottom left) is excluded from Rani (centre) and Daniella's (right) shared engagement with the schooled literacy task.

My fieldnotes record that:

> 'Daniella and Rani hunch over the sheet, apparently discussing the work. Karen sits and looks out over the classroom. She appears to be intently observing all that is going on. She does not appear to become involved in what Rani and Daniella are doing. Daniella certainly does not invite her to and I don't think Rani does either, despite the fact that Daniella wears a badge which says she is helping Karen and Karen wears a badge which says Daniella is helping her.'
>
> [Fieldnotes 10-02-2011]

In this instance, Karen was excluded from participating in the joint production of the examinable written text by both Daniella and Rani. I note that Karen's exclusion from the production of the written text here was unusual. Where the outcomes of participation in schooled literacy tasks were not examinable, Rani in particular worked to ensure Karen was included in schooled activities. For example, Rani worked to

include Karen in a drama activity on 10/03/2011. She steered Karen through the lesson and ensured she remained involved. However in the instance described here, Karen's relatively 'lower' levels of literacy expertise meant that she could not support a favourable outcome to the schooled *examination* of a shared schooled literacy task. She was thus excluded from the activity.

Example 11 – Excluding the contributions of children with relatively lower rankings in terms of schooled literacy

In this example from January 2011, India and Amina had been asked by the teacher to work together to complete a sentence writing activity on a 'write-on wipe-off' board. These sentences were to be scrutinised with the whole class at the end of the activity to demonstrate how sentences could be composed and punctuated. In the schooled literacy *rankings* for writing, Amina occupied a relatively 'lower' group than India. My data shows that India wrote the bulk of the required sentence, leaving a small part of it for Amina to complete. The fieldnotes record what happened as Amina did so:

> 'The word India has left for Amina is 'lost' in the sentence 'My Mummy was lost.' However as Amina writes, India takes hold of the end of the pen and steers the writing. In the end, India takes the pen off Amina altogether and writes 'lost' saying, 'There, perfect.' when she has finished. The class return to the carpet. India leads Amina to the front on the right of the IWB (Interactive White Board).
>
> On the carpet, India holds the white board and rubs out the last trace of Amina's attempt at the word 'lost', leaving only her own (India's) spelling of the word.'
>
> [Fieldnotes 27-01-2011]

In this instance, India ensured that the contribution of a lower *ranking* child in terms of schooled literacy - Amina - would not be made available for *examination* by the teacher. She therefore excluded Amina from participation in the production of the written text. As in Example 10, this exclusion only affected the instance that involved the shared production of an examinable text. Elsewhere in the data, India worked to include Amina in a spoken task (10/03/2011) leaning forward to listen to what she had

to say and commenting ‘You’re very quiet’. However when the activity involved the joint production of an examinable text, Amina’s relatively ‘lower’ ranking in terms of schooled literacy expertise meant she was excluded from contributing to the production of that text.

These examples suggest that Amber Class’ children’s interpretive reproduction of *ranking* as part of their in-school literacy practices meant that children within schooling judged as having less literacy expertise, could be excluded from valuable and useful in-class peer culture practices of shared engagement with *examinable* schooled literacy tasks.

The evidence presented in this section of the chapter suggests that the schooled management of children’s relative literacy expertise by grouping them according to the outcomes of ongoing *examinations* of their literacy ‘ability’ or ‘attainment’ (6.1.3, above) does not allow enough scope for considering how young children interpret such practices. The application of Foucault’s concept of *ranking* (Foucault 1977) supports the denaturalisation of such practices in ways that opens them up to critical scrutiny. The data examples above have focused on the children’s interpretations of schooled practices of *ranking* children in terms of their relative literacy expertise on those children’s in-school social practices. My analysis of Examples 1 -11 inclusive suggests that the children: i) aspired to attain ‘higher’ *rankings* within schooled literacy; ii) interpretively reproduced schooled literacy *rankings* in order to support their competitive participation in schooled literacy; iii) associated their relative positions within schooled literacy *rankings* with moral worth; and iv) used their peers’ *rankings* in relation to schooled literacy expertise to inform processes of inclusion and exclusion. This analysis raises questions about the desirability or otherwise of these effects of the schooled deployment of *ranking*, particularly for those children *ranked* as ‘lower’ in terms of their relative literacy expertise. It is thus important to consider the effects of

the naturalised organisational processes and procedures of schooling on young children's interpretive reproduction of in-school literacy practices.

However, I remind the reader that adopting a Literacy as a Social Practice (LSP) perspective to exploring young children's in-school literacy practices supports an exploration of different discourses and practices of literacy that co-exist in classroom contexts (cf Bourne 2001,2002; Maybin 2007; Chapter 4:4.3.1; Chapter 5: 5.1.1). In section 6.3 (below) I describe Amber Class' in-class peer culture practice of managing relative expertise as a shared resource which supported sharing engagement with schooled literacy tasks (Chapter 5 5.2). This classroom peer culture practice co-existed with the schooled discourses and practices described in 6.1 and 6.2 (above). This description suggests that, within the children's in-class peer culture, literacy could be a collective accomplishment achieved through social interaction. It thus offers valuable insights into alternative discourses of relative expertise that have potential for supporting young children's in-school literacy acquisition.

6.3 Managing relative literacy expertise as a shared resource

Young children's management of relative expertise in Amber Classroom did not always involve interpretively reproducing schooled practices of *ranking*. Within Amber Class children's in-class peer culture, relative expertise could be drawn on as a helpful resource as part of the classroom peer culture value for sharing engagement with schooled literacy tasks (Chapter 5: 5.2). The literacy practices described in Examples 12 and 13 (below) show how the young children in Amber Classroom were able to: i) carefully identify specific areas of need; ii) actively manage both the giving and receiving of support; iii) draw on knowledge of 'basic skills' in literacy that is so valued within dominant discourses of schooled literacy (see also Chapter 4: 4.3.5 and 4.3.6); iv) be sensitive and tactful when working with peers; and v) use complex interactional work to share relative expertise successfully (see also Chapter 4:4.3.5). I note that in

both examples below the children had selected their own partner to work with and were judged within schooled literacy as having similar levels of literacy competence. The examples are followed by references to the wider literature which demonstrate that young children in other educational contexts are able to draw on and manage relative expertise as part of their shared engagement with schooled literacy tasks. This analysis demonstrates how studying what young children do when they practice literacy in schooling can offer insights into alternative ways of managing the phenomenon of relative literacy expertise in schools.

Example 12: Sharing relative expertise in reviewing writing

The data below is taken from an interview with two children – Rani and Alison – during which they spontaneously began to review the texts they had recently completed in a schooled writing lesson and which had already been marked by the teacher (07/04/2011). The data is concerned with the children's management of Alison's difficulties when reading back her completed text. In this instance Rani supported Alison by sensitively offering her own expertise as a resource and both children made decisions about where the use of Rani's expertise was appropriate. This example is described through the presentation of Alison's text in Fig. 6.6 (below) and transcriptions of two stretches of interaction in Data Transcriptions 6.4 and 6.5 (below). I have annotated Alison's text with bold capital letters which indicate sections of the text that the children refer to in the interaction described in Data Transcriptions 6.4 and 6.5.

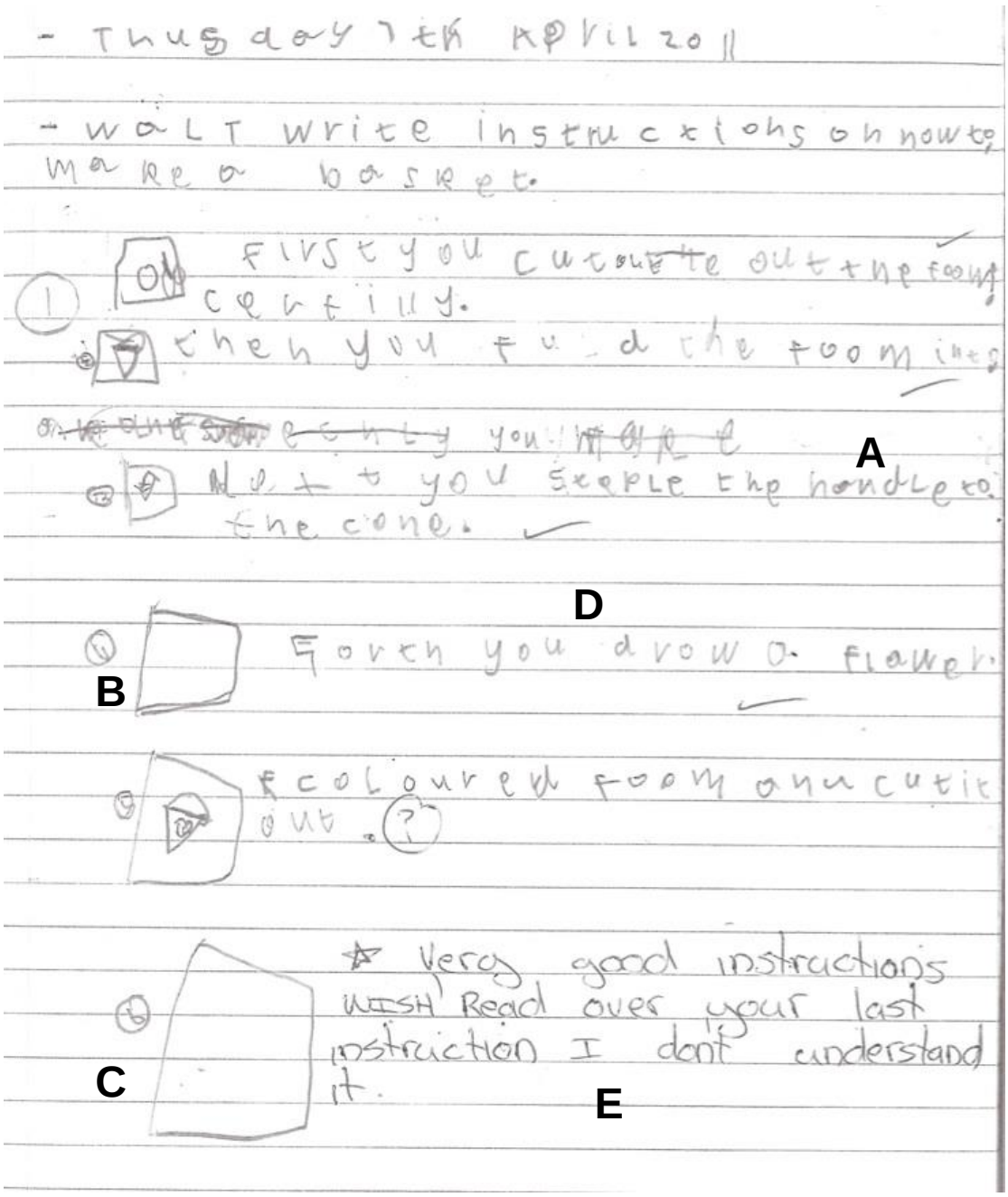


Figure 6.6 Alison's completed and marked instructions for making a model of a flower
The bold capital letters refer to sections of the text that the children referred to in the interaction reproduced in Data Transcriptions 6.4 and 6.5 below

Data Transcription 6.4 (below) begins when Rani intervened to help Alison as she read her completed text to me. The children's interaction concerns the sentence 'Next you staple the handle to the cone' at **A** (Fig. 6.6, above); and the blank boxes at **B** and **C** (Fig. 6.6, above), which were intended to contain pictures to illustrate the instructions.

1	Rani:	Shall I help you
2		Where are you up to
3	Alison:	Erm
4	Rani:	There
5	Alison:	Yeah
6	Rani:	*((Reading the sentence at **A** Fig 6.6))* Handle the (^^^^^)
7		You forgot to do all the pic[tures *((Reference to the blank boxes at **B** and **C**, Fig. 6.6))*
8	Alison:	[(I'm sorry)

Data Transcription 6:4 Audio Interview 07/04/2011

Data Transcription 6.4 shows that Rani's offer of support was carefully managed. At line (1) Rani asked if Alison would like her help, and followed this up with a question about where Alison had reached in her reading of her text (2). She thus began her intervention tactfully by checking that Alison considered it appropriate and clarifying where she should begin. Rani then began reading Alison's text out loud at line (6). Rani suggested that the writing was difficult to read because Alison forgot to add pictures to parts of her text (Fig 6.6, the blank boxes at **B** and **C**). Alison agreed with this feedback with an apology for the omission (8). Thus, Rani's intervention was accepted as appropriate by Alison.

Alison then continued to read her text for a few moments before stumbling again. This part of the interaction concerns **D** in Fig.6.6, where the sentence reads 'Fourth you draw a flower'. Once more Rani intervened and offered helpful feedback:

14	Rani:	You didn't do your finger spaces that's why we
15		don't know where to read it ((Reference to the sentence at **D**, Fig 6.6))
16		Forgot your sping finger spaces

17	Alison:	No look
18		She ((the teacher)) writed ((Reference to the teacher's marking at **E**, Fig 6.6))
19		There that's a hard word that what it's sposed to be
20	Alison:	Fourth you draw a flower
21	Rani:	Full stop
22	Alison:	Yeah and

Data Transcription 6:5 Audio interview 07/04/2011

Rani suggested that Alison was finding the writing difficult to read because she had forgotten her 'finger spaces'[33] (14) – (16). Alison disagreed with Rani's suggestion (17) referring to the teacher's marking, or what 'she writed' to justify this disagreement (18). Alison then suggested that the problem might be the difficulty of the word 'fourth' itself, saying 'There that's a hard word that's what it's sposed (supposed) to be' (19). Thus Alison's rejection of Rani's intervention was considered carefully. She gave reasons for her rejection and proposed her own alternative suggestion. Thus Alison was active in ensuring Rani's support would secure a more successful engagement with the task in hand.

In this example, Alison's difficulties in reading back the text she had produced were used by the children to inform them of when Rani's intervention would be appropriate. Once identified, these areas were carefully addressed, with Alison only accepting Rani's support when she felt it was needed. This example shows how, in Amber Class' children's interpretive reproduction of literacy practices, relative expertise could be actively and sensitively managed as a useful resource in order to complete a schooled literacy task.

[33] 'Finger space' refers to the practice of placing a finger between written words to secure appropriate spacing between them.

Example 13 Sharing relative expertise in 'basic skills'

This example illustrates how Amber Class' children's sharing of relative expertise could firstly draw on their knowledge of 'basic skills' in literacy that are so valued within dominant discourses of schooled literacy; and secondly involve complex interactional work to share expertise successfully. In a literacy lesson from February 2011, Dean was writing the sentence 'I am gonna get Pokemon for my birthday'. He had successfully written the first two words of this sentence 'I am' but encountered a problem with writing 'gonna get'. Once Dean had identified this problem, he made a request for support from Liam, but only when he had reached the limit of his own expertise. Data Transcription 6.6 (below) begins as Liam starts to support Dean in spelling. For clarity, I note that whilst Dean requested help to spell 'gonna get', Liam began to support him in a more 'Standard English' spelling of 'going to get':

1	Liam:	/g/ oh
2		[/o/
3	Dean:	[oh
4	Liam	Just- yeah go
5	Dean:	(Go on) I'm waiting [for you
6	Liam:	[(It's
		like)
7	Liam	Did you write an /o/?
8		/g/ oh /i/
9	Dean:	/i/
10	Dean:	What's that
11	Liam:	an en
12	Dean:	huh?
13	Liam:	Do you know what an en is?
14	Dean:	em
14	?:	my- ((this is another child))
16	Liam:	An en then a /g/ (.) together
17	Dean:	en then /g/
18		done it
19	Liam:	going to

Data Transcription 6:6 Audio recording 18/02/2011

In this stretch of interaction the support was carefully managed by both children. Liam began by spelling out the word ‘going’ as requested by Dean (1). As Dean wrote the word, Liam summarised what had been spelt so far (4). Dean prompted Liam when he was ready for support with the next word (5) and Liam checked what Dean had done (7) before adding the next letter /i/ (8). Dean then queried one of Liam’s suggestions (10) and Liam clarified what the problem might be (13). Following this, Liam gave explicit instructions about the final two letters (16); Dean announced he had completed the word (18); and Liam situated what Dean had written so far – ‘going’ - in the context of what they would write next – ‘to’ (19). In this instance, the children’s work to spell ‘going to get’ demonstrates how they managed the sharing of expertise as a resource through relatively complex spoken interactions involving: summarising (4); checking progress (7); clarifying points of confusion (10) – (13); and contextualising the work in progress (19). Furthermore, both children drew on ‘basic skills’ promoted within schooled literacy discourses - both children used their knowledge of written letters and Liam used his knowledge of Standard English written forms to support Dean’s sentence writing.

Similar practices of sharing relative expertise to those described in Examples 12 and 13 (above) have been observed by other authors studying children’s in-school literacy practices. For example Chen and Gregory (2004), describe how two Cantonese speaking Primary school pupils, aged 7 and 9, worked together on a schooled literacy task. One child supplied proficiency in English and the other controlled the way that proficiency was shared between them (Chen and Gregory 2004 p.127). Similarly Datta (2004) describes how two groups of children ‘…support each other’s language and literacy learning through their friendship.’ (Datta 2004 p.140). Thus, within children’s peer cultures, literacy can be a collective accomplishment achieved through complex social interaction involving drawing on relative expertise as a shared resource.

The examples of the reciprocal sharing of relative literacy expertise that I have offered in this section of the chapter offer insights into the possibilities for managing literacy expertise as a shared resource. This is not to suggest that children's classroom peer culture practices of sharing of relative expertise are always ideal. I remind the reader that 6.2.6 (above) contained examples where children in teacher-assigned groups excluded children who were ranked as having 'lower' schooled literacy expertise from participation in schooled literacy tasks involving the production of *examinable* joint texts. In contrast, the children in Examples 12 and 13 (above) had chosen whom they preferred to work with and were supporting the production of one child's individual text. This suggests that if such useful processes of sharing relative expertise such as those described above are to form part of the organisation of literacy curricula, then careful consideration is required of firstly the possible effects of the ongoing schooled *examination* of young children's literacy proficiency and secondly the ways in which the complex interactional work required might be supported, particularly when children are required to work with peers who are unfamiliar to them or have different experiences of literacy.

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated the importance of understanding the effects of long-standing organisational practices and procedures of schooled literacy on young children's interpretive reproduction of in-school literacy practices. The analysis has shown that the schooled perception of the beneficial aspects of grouping children according to their literacy 'ability,' 'attainment' or 'learning needs' (6.1.2, above) did not allow enough scope for considering how young children interpret such practices. Thus the effects of these interpretations were unforeseen within the dominant discourses of schooled literacy, particularly since in-class peer culture practices arising from such interpretations did not disrupt the 'orderly' running of schooled literacy lessons (6.2.1, above). The evidence presented in this chapter raises questions about the potential long-term effects of the children's interpretation of schooled literacy rankings on their

in-school acquisition of literacy, particularly given Street's assertion that '…the processes whereby reading and writing are taught are what constitutes the meaning of it for particular practitioners.' (Street 1984, p.8). Within the children's classroom peer culture, such *ranking* was associated with: i) the requirement to participate in schooled literacy competitively in order to attain a higher *ranking* than one's peers; ii) estimations of a child's moral worth; and iii) in-class peer culture practices of inclusion and exclusion. These classroom peer culture perceptions had particular effects on the children ranked as 'lower attaining' within schooled literacy, including a perception that their difficulties with schooled literacy tasks could be attributed to a failure to behave 'properly'; and the potential to be excluded from sharing engagement with certain schooled literacy tasks.

However, schooled discourses and practices of hierarchically *ranking* children according to the outcomes of *examinations* of their literacy expertise were not the only way of managing relative literacy expertise that I found in Amber Classroom. The children's interpretive reproduction of literacy practices that draw on relative literacy expertise as a shared resource described in 6.3 (above) offer valuable insights into alternative discourses of such expertise that have the potential to support young children's collaborative in-school literacy acquisition through social interaction. It is interesting to note that, in Examples 12 and 13 (6.3, above) the children seemed able to 'tailor' their participation in schooled literacy activities 'according to need' as envisaged in the policy documents of the dominant schooled literacy (DCSF 2007, 2009 6.1.2, above). This suggests firstly that naturalised schooled practices of hierarchical *ranking* and grouping are not the only, or the most effective, way of managing relative literacy expertise in classrooms; and secondly that careful observations of children's in-school literacy practices have the potential to support the development of literacy education polices which support young children's in-school literacy acquisition.

Chapter 7 The Interpretive Reproduction of Docility

In this chapter I argue that at least some children in Amber Class managed schooled practices of *surveillance* and the *examination* (Chapter 3: 3.1.2.2 and 3.1.2.3) by engaging in the 'interpretive reproduction of docility' in their in-school literacy practices. From a Foucauldian perspective, the deployment of *surveillance* and the *examination* is intended to have the effect of producing 'docile bodies' whose literate behaviour conforms to what is considered 'normal' within schooled literacy (Chapter 3: 3.1.2.1). However such a perspective does not capture the active, creative ways in which the young children in Amber Class engaged with the institutional context of the Classroom (Chapter 4: 4.2.2; Chapter 5) as they practised literacy in school. Understanding this engagement to involve processes of 'interpretive reproduction' (Corsaro 2005, 2011) supports an exploration of the different ways in which the children interpretively reproduced docility as they engaged with disciplinary technologies such as *surveillance* and the *examination*. This analysis demonstrates that schooled notions of what is considered 'normal literate behaviour' constrain the practices of literacy young children interpretively reproduce in classrooms. However this does not mean that the children subject themselves to schooled literacy perspectives on how literacy should be practised. Rather children are able to give the *appearance* of subjection whilst maintaining their own values, attitudes and beliefs about how literacy should be practised.

I begin by describing how researchers have applied Foucault's concept of 'docility' to studying schooled literacy practices and procedures (7.1.1). I then present data showing how Amber Class' children incorporated the disciplinary technologies of *surveillance* and *examination* (Chapter 3: 3.1.2.2; 3.1.2.3) into their interpretive reproduction of literacy practices in school. I describe how the children in Amber Class: i) displayed docile practices of literacy to the teacher as an examining adult (7.2.1); ii) worked to present themselves as more 'docile' than their peers (7.2.2); iii) accounted

for *surveillance* in the literacy practices they interpretively reproduced to engage with schooled literacy tasks (7.3); and iv) emphasised those practices of literacy they interpreted as being most valued in schooling in their schooled literacy practices (7.4). The analysis demonstrates that studying young children's interpretive reproduction of docility can offer valuable insights into how those children understand the process of being taught to read and write in school. I conclude that schooled practices that begin from overly narrow notions of what is 'normal' for young children's literacy acquisition are limited in their perspective on young children's literacy practices in ways that may have significant effects on the potential of schools to support young children's literacy acquisition.

7.1 The interpretive reproduction of docility in Amber Classroom

Foucault argues that institutions such as schools work to 'correct' the behaviour of their inmates until it aligns with what those institutions consider to be 'normal' (Foucault 1977 p.182 – 183). In terms of schooled literacy, schools deploy disciplinary technologies to ensure young children's literate behaviour aligns with what is considered 'normal' literate behaviour for particular chronological ages (Chapter 3: 3.1.2.1). Thus the application of discipline in schooled literacy is intended to '…produce… subjected and practised bodies, 'docile' bodies' (Foucault 1977 p.138) that conform to schooled literacy expectations for young children's literate behaviour.

7.1.1 Docile literate subjects

Foucault's concept of 'docility' can be exemplified by drawing on the work of authors applying his concepts to studying literacy in schooling. I have previously discussed Foucault's suggestion that the teaching of handwriting, with its emphasis on 'correct' posture, contributed to the production of 'docile bodies (Foucault 1977 p.152; Chapter 3: 3.2.1.4). This idea has been taken up by authors studying the literacy found in

schools (cf Clark and Ivanic 1997; Dixon 2011). Here, I offer a brief account of the work of other authors.

Chouliaraki (1996) describes how a Year 7 class of students (age 11 -12 years) in an English secondary school were instructed in particular procedures for working on their writing skills. Chouliaraki argues that these procedures were intended to become 'routinised' as 'good habits' (Chouliaraki 1996 p.113) thus enabling the children to develop the body's capacity for writing whilst at the same time constraining this capacity to write within a particular set of movements that effected 'obedience and subjection' (Chouliaraki ibid p.113 -114). This close entwinement of disciplinary technologies and schooled literacy is also noted by Manyak (2004), who studied literacy intervention groups in the US; and Dixon (2011) who studied the teaching of early literacy in South African elementary schools. These studies offer evidence that the entwinement of literacy and discipline in school is intended to have the effect of creating 'docile' literate subjects who accept schooled, or what Street (1995) terms 'autonomous' views and practices of literacy 'often against their own experience' (cf Street and Street 1995 p.114 Chapter 1: 1.2).

In Amber Classroom, as in the English primary schools of my experience, adults, in particular the teacher, deployed the disciplinary technologies of *surveillance* and *examination* in order to judge how far the children's literate behaviour aligned with what was considered 'normal' within schooled literacy (Chapter 3: 3.1.2). Any deviations from such 'normal' behaviour could be addressed through the provision of literacy curricula designed to bring each child's literacy practices to within the range of what was considered 'normal' (Chapter 3: 3.2.4; Chapter 6: 6.1.2). In this way, from a Foucauldian perspective, schooled literacy practices for organising early literacy curricula were intended to ensure Amber Class' children became docile literate subjects whose literacy practices aligned with schooled notions of 'normal' literate behaviour.

However, this analysis, like those in the Foucauldian studies outlined above, focuses on the discourses and practices of adults in classrooms and their intended effects. This means they offer few insights into how children manage the operation of these disciplinary technologies in their everyday encounter with schooled literacy. Below I argue that Corsaro's concept of 'interpretive reproduction' offers a way of understanding this management.

7.1.2 Docility and the interpretive reproduction of literacy practices

I have termed Amber Class' children's active management of the disciplinary technologies of *surveillance* and the *examination* the 'interpretive reproduction of docility' as it captures the way in which the children reproduced literacy practices that aligned with their interpretations of the schooled expectations for 'normal' literate behaviour. Whilst these practices did not entirely depart from the normalised schooled expectations of young children's literacy practices, they could involve the creative adaptation of such practices in ways that enabled the children to maintain their in-class peer culture values, attitudes and beliefs about what they were doing as they participated in schooled literacy tasks (see also Chapter 4: 4.2.2).

In this chapter, I describe four ways in which this interpretive reproduction of docility was achieved as part of Amber Class children's in-school literacy practices. These are:

1. **Deliberately displaying docile literacy practices (7.2.1)**

   The children perceived the teacher as an examiner of their literate behaviour and consequently worked to display their alignment with their interpretation of her requirements for schooled literacy.

2. **Presenting themselves as more docile than their peers (7.2.2)**

   In order to secure a more favourable *examination* of their own literacy practices at least some children engaged in interactions intended to invite a favourable comparison between their behaviour and that of their peers.

3. **Managing *surveillance* in their interpretive reproduction of literacy practices in school (7.3)**

   The children were careful to account for actual and potential *surveillance* in their engagement with schooled literacy tasks.

4. **Publicly displaying normalised practices of schooled literacy (7.4)**

   At least some children's public literacy practices emphasised the use of particular 'basic skills' which, whilst not always the sole, or even the most useful, method of addressing the task in hand, were seen by the children as most valued within schooled literacy.

I shall now draw on my ethnographic data to discuss each of these aspects of the children's interpretive reproduction of docility as part of their in-school literacy practices.

7.2 Presenting oneself as a docile literate subject

The children in Amber Classroom were careful to present themselves to adults as docile literate subjects. This meant that they were concerned to make aspects of their literacy practices that aligned with the expectations of schooled literacy available to adult *surveillance* and possible *examination*. In this section of the chapter I describe how the children in Amber Classroom: i) made deliberate displays of their docile literate practices; and ii) worked to present themselves to adults as more docile than their peers. I illustrate each of these with examples from my data here.

7.2.1 Displays of alignment with schooled literacy expectations

The first set of data examples here are concerned with the children's displays of alignment with the requirements of schooled literacy to the teacher in her role as the examining adult in Amber Classroom (Chapter 3: 3.2.3; 3.2.5).

Example1: Aligning one's work to a praised example

This first example is taken from a lesson where the children were required to make Mother's Day cards (01/04/2011). The teacher was praising what Ben had written in his card as a way of giving the rest of the class ideas about what they could write. Lee was seated some distance away on the other side of the classroom (Fig. 7.1, below), but he called across to emphasise that his work was similar:

Figure 7.1 Lee calls out 'Yeah, so did I'
Data Transcription 7:1 (below): Line 7. The teacher is directly in front of the camera and Lee is seated across the classroom.

1	Teacher:	But then he said why his Mummy's special
2		So he's given a [reason why his Mummy's special
3		[Lee - seated at the table by the double doors
4		- raises his hand
5		So [his Mummy can go aah
6	Lee:	[so did I ((see Fig. Below))
7	Lee:	Yeah so did I

```
8    Teacher:   ((Looks up at Lee)) That's brilliant
```

Data Transcription 7:1 Video recording 01/04/2011

As the teacher praised Ben's work as an example of a successful Mother's Day message at lines ((1) – (2)) and (5), Lee raised his hand (4) and asserted that he had done the same thing (6) and (7), thus making his alignment with schooled literacy expectations available for adult *surveillance*. The teacher responded that this was 'brilliant' (8). In this way Lee's display of alignment with schooled literacy expectations was rewarded by the examining adult.

Example 2: Demonstrating recognition of the teacher's expectations

This example is taken from a literacy lesson on 06/05/2011. The teacher had been addressing the class when she was interrupted. Donna and Meena then expressed their alignment with her expectations by calling out that they knew what she was about to say:

```
1    Teacher:  ((addressing the class))
2              I'm not going to be marking your draw-
3              (.)
4              ((The children continue to work))
5    Donna:    ((turns around to look at the teacher))
6              I know what you was about to say ((turns back to
7              face her table))
8              You're not going to be mar- marking our drawings
9    Meena:    Only our writing
10   Donna:    Yes
```

Data Transcription 7:2 Video and audio recording 06/05/2011

In this example, the teacher was emphasising that the children should focus on their writing rather than their drawing by telling them she wouldn't mark, or *examine*, their drawing (2) (see also Chapter 4: 4.1.1; 4.1.2). However, she was interrupted before she had finished her sentence. Here Donna called out to her that she knew how the

sentence would end ((6) – (8)) and Meena loudly supplied the end of the sentence (9). Here both children publicly demonstrated their recognition of, and alignment with schooled literacy requirements.

Example 3: Asserting the teacher's expectations had already been met

In this example, from the same lesson as above (06/05/2011) the teacher was working with a small group of six children including Meena, who had nearly completed the schooled writing task the teacher was discussing. Data Transcription 7.3 (below) begins as the teacher was showing the group how to compose a sentence to accompany a picture they had stuck in their books:

1	Teacher:	Right
2		brilliant
3		the old man is pulling out the turnip
4		((points at the child's book she is
5		holding as if she is pointing to
6		words in a written sentence))
7		but
8		((asking whole group))
9		did the turnip move
10	Group:	no
11	Teacher:	but it didn't move ((points into the
12		book again))
13	Meena:	I done that ((smiles))
14	Teacher:	Right

Data Transcription 7:3 Audio and video recording 06/05/2011

In this example the teacher was demonstrating composing a sentence orally before writing it down (Chapter 4: 4.1.2). She began by repeating the sentence to the group of children at line (3), pointing at a child's book to indicate where it could be written. She

then extended the sentence by adding a high value connective – the word 'but' - (7) (Chapter 5: 5.4.2) and adding the further detail that the turnip did not move[34] (11). Meena made a verbal response to this demonstration, smiling and asserting 'I done that' (13). In this way, she emphasised that aspects of the examinable text that she had produced prior to this discussion aligned with schooled expectations for 'normal' literate behaviour.

Examples 2 and 3 (above) are taken from a video of the same lesson (06/05/2011). In that lesson, three children seated at the same table - Donna, Meena and Jessica - worked to demonstrate literate behaviour that aligned with the teacher's expectations. Meena told the teacher on three separate occasions how many lines of writing she had to complete; Jessica demonstrated how well she was working whenever the teacher was close by; and Donna made two attempts to show her work to the teacher. Further examples of deliberate displays of docility occur across the data. These include Colin interrupting the teacher to tell her he had completed three sentences in his phonics book (14/10/2010); Martin, Alison and Donna emphasising their use of phonic strategies of spelling and loudly commenting on what they were doing as they composed sentences during a guided writing lesson (08/11/2010); Colin crossing the classroom to tell the teacher he had used a 'wow' word (high value descriptive adjective) in his writing (10/03/2010); Martin calling out an adjective to the teacher as she worked with another child (10/03/2011); and Ben interrupting the teacher's suggestion that a child making a Mother's day card draw a bunch of flowers, to say that he had already intended to do so (01/04/2011).

Such behaviour was often verbally rewarded by the teacher, for instance in Example 1 Lee's assertion that he had done the same as Ben was described by the teacher as 'brilliant'. Such verbal rewards were part of what Foucault describes as a system of

[34] The children are writing the story of 'The Great Big Enormous Turnip' a traditional European folk tale

'gratification-punishment' designed to bring the behaviour of the inmates of institutions within the range of what is considered 'normal' (Foucault 1977, p.180). Thus the children in Amber Class worked to present themselves to examining adults as docile subjects of schooled literacy by deliberately making displays of docile literate behaviour which could be rewarded by the teacher.

7.2.2 Presenting oneself as more docile than one's peers

In order to secure a more favourable *examination* of their literacy practices some of Amber Class' children engaged in public displays of practices that would suggest they were more docile subjects of the discourses and practices of schooled literacy than their peers. This meant that some children's eagerness to present themselves as docile subjects of schooled literacy could result in divisive social practices. I illustrate this here with two examples from my data.

Example 4: Jessica checks all hers

In this example from the lesson in May 2011 discussed in Examples 2 and 3 (above, 06/05/2011), Jessica worked to present herself as a more docile participant in a schooled literacy activity than Liam. Liam had chosen to stick a set of pictures in his book in a way that was different than expected within the school assigned writing task, thus drawing a rebuke from the teacher. The pictures were intended to help the children write the story of 'The Enormous Turnip'. The teacher was now sitting with Liam and helping him 'correct' his work. As she did so, Jessica, seated next to Liam, seemed anxious to demonstrate her own more docile participation in the task.

As the teacher rebuked Liam, Jessica loudly read out the work she had already written. She then told the teacher she was 'checking' her work and repeated this assertion as the teacher continued to support Liam. Data Transcription 7.4, below, records the outcome of Jessica's display of docility:

```
1    Jessica:  Miss
2              I'm checking all mine
3    Teacher:  Good girl
4              that makes a good writer when you check your
5              writing
6              ((Jessica reads her writing out loudly as
7              the teacher makes Liam sort out his
8              pictures))
```

Data Transcription 7:4 Video recording 06/05/2016

Jessica's display of docility involved loudly reading her completed work back and checking her work to avoid mistakes such as those Liam had made ((1) – (2)). In doing so she was distancing herself from Liam's behaviour and aligning herself with the schooled expectations for 'normal' literate behaviour within the examining adult's field of *surveillance*. This behaviour eventually led to a verbal reward from the teacher, who said that Jessica was a 'good' writer ((3) – (5)). Thus Jessica succeeded in presenting herself as a more docile subject of schooled literacy than Liam.

Example 5 – Martin wasn't listening

Example 5 concerns a further instance of a deliberate display of docility at the expense of other children from the same lesson (06/05/2011). In this instance, Donna and Meena intervened as the teacher corrected Martin's work. The teacher had come to sit beside Martin and support him in altering the layout of his text. Both Donna and Meena had a clear view of what the teacher was doing. As the teacher 'corrected' Martin's work, Meena emphasised that Martin had deviated from the schooled expectations for the text; and Donna rebuked Martin, saying 'you wasn't listening' (writing lesson 06/05/2011). These comments were offered within the teacher's hearing as she worked with Martin. In this way both Meena and Donna distanced themselves from Martin's 'non-docile' literate behaviour as the teacher was 'correcting' it and deliberately displayed their alignment with schooled values, attitudes and beliefs for how literacy should be practised.

I suggest that the data presented in Examples 4 and 5 above demonstrates that the children's deliberate displays of docility could be aligned with the in-class peer culture perception that participating in schooled literacy tasks involved competing with one's peers (Chapter 5: 5.4). I have already remarked that in the writing lesson in May from which the data in both examples was taken (06/05/2011; 7.2.1, above) Donna, Meena and Jessica in particular worked to demonstrate literate behaviour that aligned with the teacher's expectations. In the instances here, these displays of docility were at the expense of Liam and Martin, both of whom had made errors in their work. This suggests that Donna, Meena and Jessica not only wished to present themselves as docile subjects of schooled literacy, but that they drew on their interpretations of the competitive aspects of schooled literacy in order to present Liam and Martin as less docile than themselves.

Example 6: Lee is a docile listener

In this example from a May 2011 lesson (12/05/11), a potential failure in a schooled literacy task led Lee to attempt to present himself as a more docile subject of schooled literacy than Meena, his partner in a shared schooled literacy task. The example shows how children's work to present themselves as docile subjects of schooled literacy could affect their in-class peer culture practices of shared engagement with schooled literacy tasks (Chapter 5: 5.2).

The teacher had divided the class into pairs and asked each pair to retell the story of the 'Three Billy Goats Gruff'[35] to each other as a preparation for writing the story down. Meena and Lee began retelling the story relatively amicably, in line with the in-class peer culture practices of shared engagement described in Chapter 5 (5.2.). Lee took the first turn in the retelling. As he did so, Meena laughed, saying 'I don't remember any of this', suggesting that she could not recall the story. She then worked co-

[35] A European traditional tale in which three goats of hierarchically ordered sizes attempt to cross a bridge guarded by a troll

operatively with Lee, prompting him as he began retelling the story. However, when it came to Meena's turn, she became confused about her portion of the retelling. Both Lee and Meena made initial attempts to resolve this problem, however the confusion remained and meant that there was a possibility that the children would not be able to complete the task as directed by the teacher. At this point Lee demanded that Meena take the blame for the potential failure:

```
1   Meena:  erm once upon a
2   Lee:    I said that
3   Meena:  (^^^^^^okay)
4           once upon a time
5   Lee:    (erm you) tell Miss that you weren't listening
6           You you were [(^^^^^^^^^^)
7   Meena:              [I were just don't
8           I just forgot
```

Data Transcription 7:5 Audio recording 12/05/2011

When Lee and Meena ran into trouble with their retelling of the story at lines ((1) – (4)), their shared engagement with the schooled literacy task broke down. Lee instructed Meena to take the blame for their difficulties, demanding she say she was not 'listening' to the teacher's instructions for the task ((5) – (6)). Lee's reference to 'listening' is significant here because listening to the teacher is an important indicator of docility in schooled literacy (cf Chouliaraki 1996, Dixon 2011). Lee was thus instructing Meena to present herself as non-docile to the teacher. Lee then attempted to present Meena's lack of docility to a nearby adult[36], as Data Transcription 7.6 shows:

```
9   Lee:    She's forgetting the story when we've just read
10          it ((addressing a nearby adult))
11          And I remember all of it
12  Meena:  I don't (have the
13          I don't have the book at home
```

Data Transcription 7:6 Audio recording 12/05/2011

[36] I only saw this adult once in my time in Amber Classroom and am not sure of their role.

Once Lee had informed the adult that Meena, and not he, had forgotten the story ((9) – (10)), he attempted to present himself as more docile than Meena by inviting a comparison between Meena's forgetting of the story and his own remembering of 'all of it' (11). Meena attempted to mitigate this comparison by arguing that Lee had an advantage because he had the book at home (12) and (13).

The focus of Lee's response to the challenges posed by the schooled literacy task was on the extent to which he could present himself as a docile subject of schooled literacy – that is, someone who listened carefully to the teacher - in comparison to Meena who, Lee asserted, quickly forgot what she had been told. It is interesting that neither Lee nor Meena asked the adult for help with retelling the story. This suggests that the institutional concern to present oneself as a docile subject of schooled literacy could supersede the literacy concern of solving problems posed by engaging with texts.

Furthermore, Examples 4, 5 and 6 suggest that within the children's in-class peer culture, the successful completion of schooled literacy tasks according to schooled expectations was associated with a child's moral worth (Chapter 6: 6.2.5). In Examples 4 and 5, Liam and Martin had made errors in the positioning of features of their text, whilst in Example 6 Meena had forgotten the story. However, the responses of Donna, Meena and Lee to these minor errors repositioned those errors as misdemeanours - particularly in the presence, or, in the case of Example 6, potential presence, of an adult. This suggests that doing one's work 'correctly' was associated with behaving 'well' or 'properly' whilst doing one's work incorrectly was associated with 'improper' behaviour.

The data examples above show that the children in Amber Classroom were keen to make docile literate behaviour available to the teacher's *surveillance*. In doing so they demonstrated that their literate behaviour aligned with what schooling considered 'normal' by i) including approved content in their texts (Example 1); ii) anticipating

schooled values for writing over pictures (Example 2); iii) meeting schooled requirements for sentence composition (Example 3); iv) checking their written texts to ensure they aligned with schooled expectations (Example 4); and v) listening carefully to adults (Example 5). The evidence presented above also demonstrates that the children made deliberate displays of applying phonics as a spelling strategy; including valued linguistic features (wow words) in their texts; and completing the requisite amount of sentences. These instances suggest that the children were 'docile' subjects, reproducing the practices of literacy, particularly the application of 'basic skills' that were emphasised in schooled practices of teaching young children to read and write.

However, the evidence presented in Examples 4 – 6 suggests further effects of the children's eagerness to present themselves as docile subjects of schooled literacy. In those examples, the children's work to present themselves to adult *surveillance* as more docile than their peers prompted the children to: a) distance themselves from those perceived as less docile; b) abandon valued practices of sharing engagement with schooled literacy tasks; and c) supersede concerns to engage with literacy problems posed by schooled literacy tasks in favour of meeting the children's perceptions of institutional requirements. I suggest that these additional effects are not anticipated in the schooled deployment of *surveillance* and the *examination* to organise literacy teaching in the classroom (see also Chapter 6:6.2.6).

Furthermore, I argue that Examples 1 - 6 of Amber Class children's more docile literate behaviour should not be understood as a straightforward example of 'obedience' and 'subjection' (Chouliaraki 1996; Foucault 1977) to the discourses and practices of schooled literacy. Rather, the children were interpretively reproducing docility in that they worked to *present* themselves as docile subjects of schooled literacy when there was a possibility of adult *surveillance*. This does not mean that the children subjected themselves to the values, attitudes and beliefs of schooled literacy, simply that they perceived that giving the *appearance* of subjection to the discourses and practices of

schooled literacy was a social priority for participating in schooled literacy tasks in the social world of the classroom.

This interpretation offers three areas of interest for the study of young children's in-school literacy practices. Firstly, it is interesting to observe *what* children wish to be made available to adult *surveillance*. In the examples above this included the deployment of 'basic skills' that are emphasised in schooled literacy, such as the use of 'wow' words and phonic spelling strategies, as well as the children's alignment with the teacher's expectations for written texts. Secondly, it is interesting to observe *how* children make aspects of their literate behaviour available to adult *surveillance*. Examples 4, 5 and 6 suggest that some children were prepared to work to present themselves as more docile than their peers. The deployment of such strategies provides further evidence for young children's perceptions of schooled literacy as involving: a) competition with one's peers (Chapter 5: 5.4); and b) associations of the outcomes of the *examination* and subsequent *ranking* in schooled literacy with a child's moral worth (Chapter 6: 6.2.5). A third area of interest is the observation of what young children decide *not* to make available to adult *surveillance*, either through concealing particular practices or simply not emphasising them to adults. I suggest that a consideration of these three aspects of young children's interpretive reproduction of docility can offer insights into how those children perceive the process of being taught to read and write in school.

In the following sections of this chapter (7.3 and 7.4) I explore these three aspects of Amber Class children's interpretive reproduction of docility. I particularly focus on: i) the children's strategies for managing what is made available to adult *surveillance* and the *examination*; and ii) how schooled expectations of particular 'normalised' literate behaviours are emphasised in the children's management of *surveillance* and the *examination*. This exploration demonstrates that the docile literacy practices the young

children in Amber Class displayed to adult *surveillance* did not necessarily reflect what those children were actually doing as they participated in schooled literacy tasks.

7.3 Amber Class children managing *surveillance* and the *examination*

In this section of the chapter, I present data which demonstrates that the displays of docile literate behaviour described in 7.2.1 and 7.2.2 (above) were part of the interpretive reproduction of docility, whereby the children managed the deployment of *surveillance* and the *examination* as part of their in-school literacy practices. This aspect of the children's literacy practices meant that Amber Class children's interpretive reproduction of 'docility' did not always arise from 'subjection' to the values, attitudes and beliefs of schooled literacy, as suggested by the Foucauldian studies described in 7.1.1, above. Rather it represented a way of negotiating the social world of Amber Classroom in ways that caused the least disruption to the smooth running of the in-school literacy lessons (Chapter 6: 6.2.1) whilst allowing the children to maintain their in-class peer culture priorities for engaging in schooled literacy tasks. An example of such management of *surveillance* has already been seen in Chapter 5 (5.1.6), where one of the children's special requirements for peer-to-peer copying was that there was a low risk of adult *surveillance*. I offer further illustrations of this management of *surveillance* and the *examination* here, with examples from my data.

7.3.1 Strategies for managing adult *surveillance*

The first set of examples concern the strategies the children had developed within their in-class peer culture that enabled them to manage the adult deployment of *surveillance*.

Example 7: Inviting surveillance of aligned behaviours to disguise prohibited ones

This first example concerns Jessica and Dean's management of *surveillance* in a spelling test (09/12/2010). Throughout the test the two children had been whispering to each other, a practice forbidden in such tests (Chapter 3: 3.2.3.1). These whispered conversations had successfully evaded adult *surveillance*. However at one point in the lesson, as the teacher was addressing the whole group of children engaged in the spelling test, Jessica interrupted her, calling across the class that she had a poster at home which had words and symbols on it that aligned with the school's phonics and maths teaching approaches[37]. Jessica's interruption was rewarded by the teacher describing her poster as 'brilliant'. In this case, Jessica's interruption invited *surveillance* of behaviour that she considered to be approved of within schooled literacy – an alignment of home and school resources for teaching literacy and maths - whilst avoiding *surveillance* of behaviour that she considered to be disapproved of – whispering to a friend in a spelling test.

Example 8: Peer group practices for evading surveillance

My data suggests that, within Amber Class children's in-class peer culture, the children were able to engage in forbidden whispered conversations in tests in ways that evaded adult *surveillance*. This is supported by evidence from an interview with Dean, the child with whom Jessica was whispering during the spelling test in Example 7 (above). The evidence presented here suggests that, within Amber Class' in-class peer culture, the children were firstly aware that the possibility of the teacher's *surveillance* posed a problem when they wished to have peer-to-peer conversations in certain lessons (Data Transcription 7.7, below); and secondly that they had developed particular practices that enabled them to manage this problem (Data Transcription 7.8, below). The transcription begins when Dean explains to me (Lucy) that several children were not

[37] On occasion, such interruptions were permitted by the teacher (see also Example 1, above).

allowed to sit together because the teacher considered that they talked too much during lessons:

1 Dean: They just talk
2 They talk loud
3 Not loud they just-
4 They think they're talking quiet when Miss can hear them
5 ((Lucy laughs))
6 They're talking quiet but Miss can still hear them
7 Lucy: And she can still hear them

Data Transcription 7:7 Interview 10/02/2011

Dean's assertion that 'they think they're talking quiet when Miss can hear them' suggests that the problem that Dean perceived with the talking was that the children could be heard by the teacher – that is, made available to the teacher's *surveillance*. A moment later, Dean suggested that there was a way of talking that could evade adult *surveillance* whilst allowing peer conversations to go ahead. The numbering in Data Transcription 7.8 is not continuous to reflect an untranscribed portion of our conversation:

11 Lucy: So is there a way of talking quietly so you can't be heard
12 Dean: (^^^) You don't need to whisper
13 Lucy: Why not
14 Dean: You can just
15 erm (talk to your friend) and go and say anything what you wanna say
16 Lucy: Miss can't hear you
17 How do you do that without whispering
18 Dean: It's like whispering

19 But (I know a way) of not whispering

Data Transcription 7:8 Interview 18/02/2011

Dean seemed to suggest at line (18) – (19) that he knew a way of talking quietly that didn't involve whispering and allowed peer-to-peer conversations to go ahead whilst evading adult *surveillance*. This certainly seemed true of some of the quiet conversations that my recording equipment picked up during test situations. In particular in a spelling test in November 2010, Martin, Jane and Donna competed as to who could write their spellings first (25/11/2010); and in a writing assessment in February 2011, a group of five children engaged in quiet conversations throughout the test (04/02/2011). In both these examples it is often very difficult to distinguish which child was talking and the content of the speech is sometimes imperceptible. However it is clear that a conversation is taking place, even in the quiet of a formal test and in both cases these conversations evaded adult *surveillance*.

Examples 7 and 8 suggest that the children were developing strategies that enabled behaviours that were disapproved of within schooled literacy, such as talking during tests, to continue away from adult *surveillance*. Such strategies suggest the interpretive reproduction of docility in that the children appeared to align with schooled expectations for quiet participation in schooled literacy tasks whilst maintaining in-class peer culture priorities for social interaction during participation in such tasks (Chapter 4: 4.3.3).

Example 9: Anticipating adult surveillance

This example shows that some children were sufficiently experienced in the routines of Amber Classroom to anticipate adult *surveillance* before it occurred. It is taken from a literacy lesson in December 2010. Three children were working on a school-assigned task that involved producing lists of rhyming words and writing them down on a card with a pen. The children's engagement with this task was interspersed with off-task

gossip and efforts to find working pens. Whilst Daniella and Alison shared engagement with this task, this did not extend to the third child at the table - Sophia - whose activity seemed to concentrate on finding a working pen. However, when Daniella and Alison felt there was a risk of adult *surveillance*, their behaviour changed to ensure all three children at the table, including Sophia, had completed enough of the task to present themselves as docile literate subjects:

1	Sophia:	But I can't even (do the) writ[ing
2	Alison:	[Quick before she's finished
3	Daniella:	Sophia she's not (gonna be)-
4		no
5		she's not gonna be proud of you
6		'cos your not (^^^)
7		you didn't do nothing.
8		[She's not gonna be proud of you.
9	Alison:	[What else can I write] ((She is heard repeating this
10		several times))
11	Daniella:	Quick
12		Do something
13	Alison:	[What else can I write
14	Sophia:	[(^^^^^ don't know any) things that rhymes
15	Daniella:	hit
16		[hit
17	Alison:	[hit
18	Alison:	(her for)
19		hit
20		hit
21	Daniella:	/h/ /i/ /t/
22	Sophia:	/huh/ /i/ /tuh/
23		((The teacher joins the table))
24	Teacher:	Well done, well done with these rhyming words
25		((The teacher leaves the table))
26	?:	(she's proud of us. We're gonna be d- finish it)
27	Sophia:	Yes, she didn't see

28 Can I do more more more

Data Transcription 7:9 Audio recording 16/12/2010

Here Alison interrupted Sophia's complaint about her pen not working at line (1) to suggest Sophia work quickly before 'she' is finished (2). From other data related to this lesson, I believe 'she' was the teacher who had been engaged in working with a reading group elsewhere in the classroom. Alison's concern about the teacher being 'finished' refers to the possibility of the teacher finishing reading with this group and beginning to circulate the classroom, checking the work of the other groups. Daniella then explained that Sophia had not written anything on her card, and was thus at risk of the teacher not being 'proud' of her ((4) - (8)). Alison appeared to return to her own work (9), perhaps to ensure that she had enough evidence of on-task behaviour, but Daniella instructed Sophia to 'do something' – presumably produce more rhyming words ((11) and (12)). Sophia said that she could not think of anything (14) and so Daniella and then Alison supplied her with a word and a spelling ((15) – (22)). After this, the teacher joined the table and rewarded the children with praise for their work, before moving on ((23) - (25)). Following this either Daniella or Alison seemed to express satisfaction at the outcome (26). Sophia also expressed relief (27).

In this example, both Daniella and Alison were aware of the teacher's movements around the room, anticipating her coming to their table before she did so. This awareness enabled them to pursue classroom peer culture priorities until they perceived a risk of coming within the teacher's field of *surveillance*. By the time the teacher reached the table, the children were able to present themselves as docile subjects, complying with schooled expectations for the schooled literacy task. Thus Daniella, Alison and Sophia successfully interpretively reproduced docility without actually becoming entirely docile subjects.

7.3.2 Managing potential *surveillance*

The next two examples concern the children's management of potential rather than actual *surveillance*. In these cases the children altered their behaviour to account for the possibility of *surveillance* when the teacher was not immediately present. This chimes with Foucault's assertion that the possibility of being observed was enough to 'maintain the disciplined individual in his subjection' (Foucault 1977 p.187). However, as I shall argue in my presentation of the examples here, the children's behaviour was more subtle than subjection in that the children incorporated their awareness of potential adult *surveillance* into their literacy practices in ways that enabled classroom peer culture priorities to continue, even when schooled discourses of young children and literacy were dominant.

Example 10: Avoiding potential 'trouble'

This example occurs a little later in the same activity as Example 9 (above). Daniella, Alison and Sophia continued interspersing work on the task with off task behaviour, including gossip. However, towards the end of the session both Alison and Daniella intervened a second time in Sophia's work when Sophia inadvertently included a forbidden expletive in her list of rhyming words. This intervention was intended to avoid a negative *examination* by the teacher. For the purposes of clarity, I note that the symbol **°** indicates a lowered tone of voice, and an underlined capitalised word suggests emphasis:

1	Sofia:	/sss/ /i/ /t/ /sh/ /i/ /t/ shit, /sh::/ it
2	Alison:	°she's doing something° ((to Daniella?))
3	Sofia:	/sh/ /i/ /t/ shit sh h h h
4	Alison:	(°There it is°)
5		That's a ef word ((to Sophia?))
6	Sarah:	ef?
7	Alison:	No
8		that one

9	Daniella:	SHIT that is
10		Rub it out ((laughs)) (^^^)
11	Sofia:	/sh/ /i/ /t/
12	Alison:	(You'll be in trouble) don't swear

Data Transcription 7:10 Audio recording 16/12/2010

As Sophia sounded out words to rhyme with 'it' she inadvertently said, and apparently wrote the expletive 'shit' at lines (1) and (3). Alison noticed this and quietly drew Daniella's attention to it (2). She then attempted to explain the problem to Sophia using the term 'f-word' to describe the expletive (5). Daniella then intervened and clarified the problem, explicitly emphasising what was wrong (9) and directly instructing Sophia to remedy the issue (10). Both Daniella and Alison appeared to enjoy this episode, with Daniella laughing (10).

In this instance the children enjoyed forbidden behaviour, in particular when Daniella repeated the expletive 'shit' out loud at (9) and laughed at (10). However, despite this enjoyment, both Alison and Daniella worked to conceal the forbidden word from *surveillance*. Alison lowered her voice when she discussed it and Daniella demanded that Sophia rub the word out. Furthermore Alison clarified that this concealment of the error was to avoid 'trouble' (12). In this way, both Daniella and Alison ensured the classroom peer culture priority of enjoying the use of a forbidden expletive was met before addressing the schooled prohibition of children from using such words. Thus, even as the children enjoyed the joke, they maintained an appearance of docility without aligning with schooled values (and wider English social values) that forbid young children from using expletives.

Example 11: Changing text production practices to account for potential surveillance

In this example India worked within the constraints imposed by potential adult *surveillance* without adopting the schooled values for literacy practices such *surveillance* was intended to enforce. The data is taken from an interview conducted in

March 2011 (03/03/2011) and the incident India describes took place in October 2010 (04/10/2010). In the interview, India described abandoning drawing a picture in order to focus on producing the written portion of her text. This action seems to be connected with India's noticing the presence of the teacher. I remind the reader that, within schooled literacy, greater importance is placed on producing written texts than drawing pictures (Chapter 4: 4.1.1; 4.1.2; see also 4.3.1). I begin by reproducing the work under discussion to clarify the transcription for the reader (Fig. 7.2, below). I then give a transcription of the part of the interview that refers to this piece of work. My (Lucy's) interpretation of what India said is highlighted in grey:

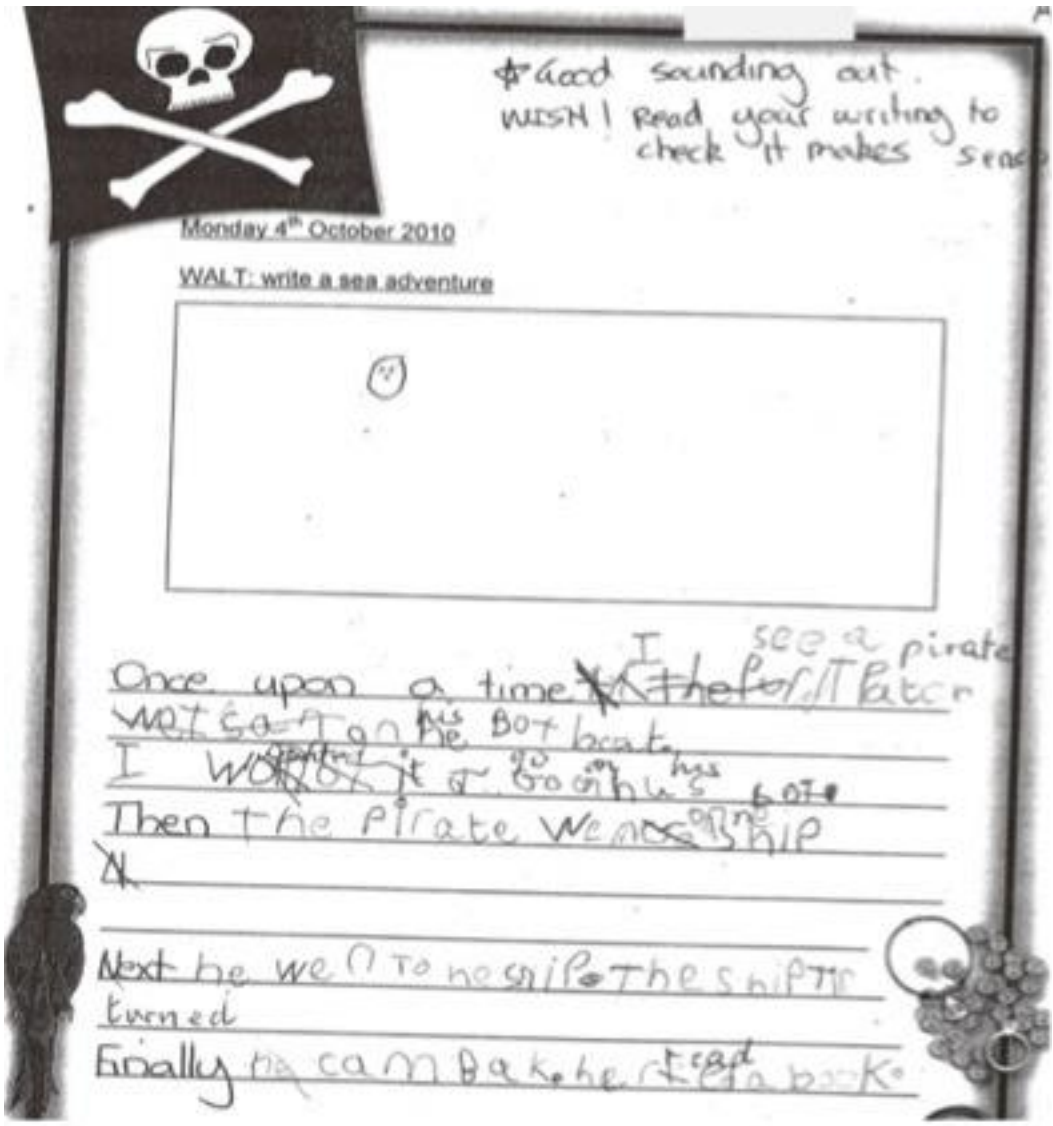


Figure 7.2 India's writing from 04/10/10

The picture of a head that India refers to in the interview is the circle containing three dots in the rectangle underneath the words 'WALT: write a sea adventure'.

1	Lucy:	Why is that one just like that
2		((Indicates picture of head in rectangular box))
3	India:	Yeah because 'm-
4		I was writing all this down
5		((*here she refers to the text as a whole*
6		*Fig 7.2*))
7	Lucy:	(^^^)
8	India:	and but when I started I writed that but
9		((*drew the small head in the box*))
10		then the teacher sawed me
11		and then I thought

12		I'll carry on with my writing
13		at the end I'll do it
14		((*finish the head*))
15		but I didn't have time
16	Lucy:	So you didn't have time
17		So you did up to here
18		Oh is that where this space is
19		((*the space underneath the small head*))
20	India:	Yeah
21	Lucy:	And the you thought you'd do your picture
22	India:	Yeah
23		And then I saw the teacher come so I done
24		that ((*the writing*))

Data Transcription 7:11 Interview 03/03/2011

In this example, India explicitly said that her decision to concentrate on the writing was connected to her sighting of the teacher ((10) – (13) and (23) – (24)). Thus her switch from drawing to writing was contingent on the potential *surveillance* of the teacher. However, India intended to return to drawing once she had fulfilled the schooled literacy requirement to focus on her writing lines ((12) – (13)). This intention shows that she accounted for the requirements of schooled literacy when under teacher *surveillance*, but would return to her own priorities for drawing the picture at a later point. This means that her observable behaviour (to examining adults) aligned with the expectations of schooled literacy, but her values, attitudes and beliefs about what she was doing did not.

Examples 7 – 11 suggest that Amber Class children's interpretive reproduction of docility did not necessarily mean that they were subjecting themselves to schooled values, attitudes and beliefs about how literacy should be practised. Rather, the children could present themselves as docile subjects of schooled literacy in order to make adults 'proud' or avoid potential 'trouble' whilst maintaining their own priorities for participating in schooled literacy tasks. Thus, the children's displays of 'docile' literate behaviour did not necessarily mean that they shared schooled values, attitudes and

beliefs for how children should practise literacy. Furthermore Example 11 in particular suggests that some normalised schooled values, attitudes and beliefs about how young children should practise literacy were viewed by the children as constraints that they needed to work around. In the case of Example 11, India's drawing of her picture was constrained by schooled literacy's value for the printed word over the visual image. However India had a strategy for working around this constraint – that of returning to the picture when she perceived herself to be outside the adult field of *surveillance*. This strategy enabled her to maintain her own value for the visual image. India's interpretive reproduction of in-school literacy practices therefore involved working around the constraints imposed by the dominance of schooled literacy discourses and practices in the classroom.

This notion that young children's in-school interpretive reproduction of literacy practices can involve working around the constraints imposed by the normalised expectations of schooled literacy is supported by the evidence presented in the last section of this chapter (7.4, below). The evidence demonstrates that Amber Class children's interpretive reproduction of docility could include an emphasis on practices of literacy that were normalised in schooled literacy but that did not necessarily reflect the most useful or meaningful way of engaging with the literacy task in hand.

7.4 Interpretively reproducing normalised practices of literacy

The evidence presented in this section of the chapter suggests that children's encounter with schooled literacy involved managing constraints upon their literacy practices that arose from the institutional imposition of normalised schooled expectations for young children's literacy practices (Chapter 3: 3.1.2.1). This means that children's docile displays of the application of 'basic skills,' such as those discussed in 7.2 (above) could potentially arise from their concern to manage their encounter with the institutional requirements of schooling rather than considerations of

the most helpful way of engaging with texts. I exemplify this below with moments from my data where children's engagement with schooled literacy tasks involved the interpretive reproduction of those practices of literacy that were normalised in the discourses and practises of schooled literacy.

7.4.1 The interpretive reproduction of 'correct' handwriting posture

The data examples below suggest that young children in Amber Class reproduced normalised schooled postures for handwriting when they perceived themselves to be within the field of adult *surveillance*, but otherwise found it comfortable or expedient to adopt alternative postures. Normalised schooled postures for handwriting have been linked to training docile bodies (cf Foucault 1977: Clark and Ivanic 1997, Dixon 2011; 7.1.1, above). In Amber Class' handwriting lessons, 'correct' posture was an important part of schooled literacy expectations for children's behaviour (Chapter 3: 3.2.1.4). This involved children sitting up straight with both feet on the floor and holding their pencil in a particular way called the 'tripod' grip. The examples below suggest that the children's alignment with such postures may have greater links to the interpretive reproduction of docility than to the most helpful way of engaging with the literacy task in hand.

Example 12: Adjusting handwriting posture to account for potential adult surveillance

There are examples of children adopting alternative postures for handwriting across the data. For instance, in Fig. 7.3 below Jessica (right) has only one foot on the floor and has her right leg tucked around her:

Figure 7.3 Jessica's (to the right of the picture) handwriting pose
Jessica sits with her left leg tucked around her and her right foot off the floor. Penny (see below) is seated on the bottom left of the picture. Although Penny's writing posture is difficult to discern here, she adjusts it when the teacher instructs Jessica to place both feet on the floor.

During the lesson depicted in Fig. 7.3 (above), the teacher came to the table and instructed Jessica to alter her writing posture to conform with that expected within schooled literacy. When the teacher did so, Penny, seated at the same table as Jessica (Fig. 7.3, bottom left), also adjusted her posture to conform to that expected within schooled literacy. Thus, Jessica and Penny found it comfortable to write in postures that were not 'normalised' within schooled literacy discourses for 'docile' literate subjects. The children only adopted such postures when the teacher directly intervened (Jessica) or when they anticipated coming within the teacher's field of *surveillance* (Penny).

Example 13: Giving the appearance of a docile handwriting posture

A further example of children's adoption of non-docile handwriting postures comes from a handwriting lesson where Dean gave the appearance of conforming to schooled expectations of handwriting posture, whilst adopting an alternative posture. This example is given with a combination of images (Fig. 7.4 and 7.5) and fieldnote extract (17/03/2011).

In this instance I was seated taking fieldnotes at a table where five children (Dean, Liam, Colin, Ben and Sophia) were engaged in the handwriting task set by the teacher.

Although I was seated next to Dean, he was around the corner of the table from me as the diagram in Fig. (7.4) below shows:

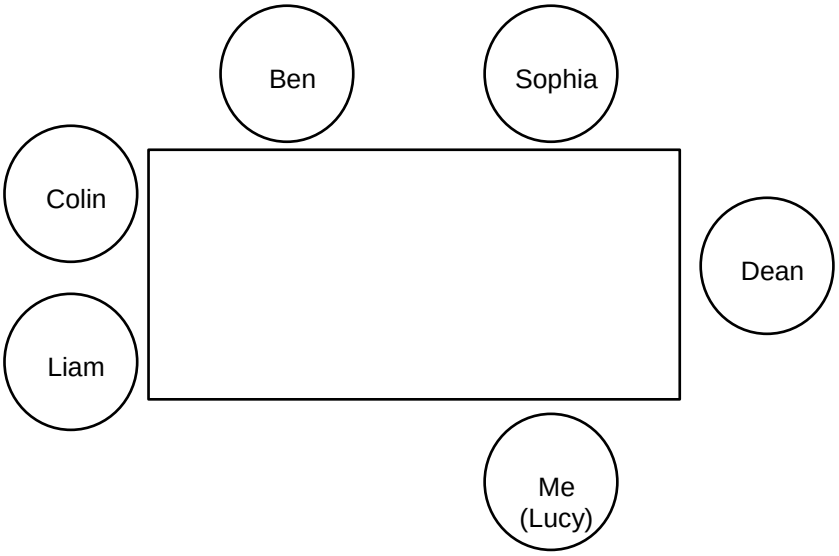


Figure 7.4 The seating arrangements at Dean's table

The children had been engaged in conversation about matters unrelated to the handwriting lesson as they engaged in the schooled task. Dean was eager to take part in this conversation but there were not enough chairs around the table for him to sit down with the other children. He thus could not adopt the normalised schooled handwriting posture, which demanded he sit on a chair. To work around this problem, Dean arranged his body to give an appearance of docility that would satisfy an observing adult, as Figure 7.5 and the extract from my fieldnotes (below) shows:

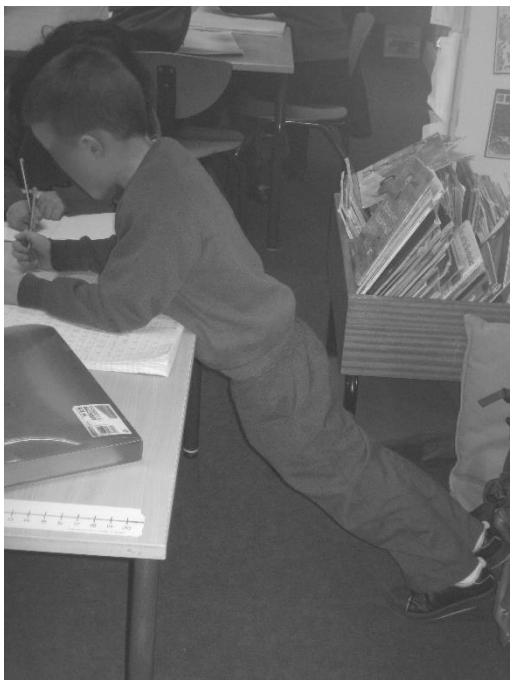


Figure 7.5 Dean's handwriting posture

> [An adult]…comes to the table and asks Dean to move, I think it is because of the talking, but realise it is because Dean does not have a chair. Even though I am sitting next to him, I did not notice as he has arranged his body so it looks like he is sitting on the chair from the table…[surface]… upwards…[Fig. 7.5, above]…Dean does not wish to move and says so, arguing that the children at the proposed new table 'distracting me, they're distracting me.' …[the adult]…does not press the point. When she has gone, Liam says 'I know why you want to stay, you want to stay with us.'
>
> [Fieldnotes 17-03-2011]

It is significant that despite Dean's non-docile handwriting posture and the peer group conversation, my fieldnotes record that Dean completed the school assigned task within schooled literacy expectations for 'normal' literate behaviour:

> '…the…[teacher]…comes over and praises them…[the children at Dean's table]… for good work. To my amazement all …have done rows of 'd's in their books – Dean has completed over half a page.'
>
> [Fieldnotes 17-03-2011]

In this example Dean's interpretive reproduction of a posture for handwriting was not contingent on its expediency for completing literacy tasks in helpful ways. Rather, it

was contingent on his awareness of firstly schooled requirements for docile literate practices and secondly in-class peer culture priorities for sharing conversations with other children.

Examples 12 and 13 therefore suggest that the normalised schooled requirements for 'correct' handwriting postures did not necessarily reflect what the children found helpful when participating in schooled literacy activities. Rather the children adopted them as part of the interpretive reproduction of docility. This suggests that the children's adoption of such postures was related more to their management of institutional constraints rather than to their engagement with the most helpful way of producing a written text.

7.4.2 Docile displays of school approved spelling practices

The next two examples represent moments in my data where the children's emphasis on particular 'basic skills' of literacy did not always reflect what they actually did as they engaged in schooled literacy tasks. The examples concern practices of spelling which are emphasised in schooled literacy; in this case the use of phonics to spell (Chapter 3: 3.2.1.1; Chapter 4: 4.1.2; 4.3.6) and the emphasis on learning individual spellings, most usually associated with the children's weekly spelling test (Chapter 3: 3.2.3.1; Chapter 6: 6.2.4). These examples suggest that normalised schooled notions of what is helpful to young children engaging with schooled literacy tasks do not necessarily reflect what is actually helpful to those children.

Example 14: Displaying using phonics to spell when using an alternative spelling strategy

In a writing lesson on 18/02/2011, Dean was working with his teacher to write the sentence 'My favourite toy is Pokemon'. Dean was encouraged to say the sounds in words before he wrote them down (Chapter 4: 4.3.6.). Data Transcription 7.12 shows that, at one stage in this process, Dean displayed the phonic strategy of saying the

sounds in the word ‘is’, even though he appears to have used an alternative strategy to spell the word on the page:

```
1  Teacher:  Right (^^^) what's the next word that's
2            going to come
3  Dean:     is ((pronounced /iz/))
4  Teacher:  Right so you write is ((pronounced
             /iz/))
5  Dean:     /i/  /s:/
6            is ((pronounced /iz/))
```

Data Transcription 7:12 Audio recording 18/02/2011

When Dean said ‘is’ at line (3) he pronounced the word as ‘/iz/’. When the teacher repeated this she also said ‘iz’ (4). A phonetic spelling of the word would therefore be ’IZ’, a mistake I have often seen in children’s writing books. However Dean, under the *surveillance* of the teacher, broke the word down into phonemes, as /i/ /s:/ (5), even though he did not pronounce the word in this way at line (3) or (6). He then wrote the /s/ phoneme as S, spelling the word in his sentence in the standard form of ‘IS’.

I believe that Dean knew how to spell the word ‘is’ from memory, so did not use phonics as an aid to spelling. However, when the teacher was seated next to him, Dean made a display of the use of phonics to spell the word ‘is’ available to the teacher’s *surveillance*, even as he drew on an alternative, more helpful, strategy for spelling the word. It is interesting to note that when the teacher had finished supporting Dean’s writing, she left the table. Once Dean perceived that he was outside the field of adult *surveillance*, he continued to say sounds in words as he spelt, but also asked the children seated near him for help with his spellings, thus combining phonics with a less docile spelling strategy of asking other children for support (see also Chapter 4: 4.3.6).

Example 14: Displaying using phonics and words learnt at home to spell

This example concerns Colin's participation in a writing assessment lesson on 04-02-2011. The children had been asked to write an account of a 'Victorians' day' which they had recently experienced in school, where they had played with Victorian era toys and replicas of domestic tools. The children's texts were to be completed independently and in silence to ensure that writing levels awarded would be an accurate reflection of what each child could do individually (Chapter 3: 3.2.3.1).

My fieldnotes record that as Colin wrote, he frequently referred to a display on the wall which contained the standard spellings of words related to the topic of the writing. I believe that Colin copied several of these words into his own writing in order to achieve 'correct' spelling. Fig 7.6 contains extracts from my fieldnotes and a photograph of the wall display to which they refer for clarity:

> As Colin writes, he frequently looks up at the Victorian display which is directly in front of him, behind Amina...
>
> [Fieldnotes 04/02/11]
>
> …Colin refers to the word wall of Victorian objects on the big double doors behind him (see photograph)
>
> [Fieldnotes 04/02/11]

Figure 7.6 Fieldnotes and wall display that demonstrate Colin's spelling strategy
The words 'mangle' and 'Victorian' are on the bottom right of the display.

In an interview after the lesson, I (Lucy) asked Colin how he had spelt the words in his finished text, which included standard spellings of ‘Victorian’ and ‘mangle’. In his replies Colin did not refer to his use of the display, instead saying firstly that he had ‘learned’ or ‘practised’ the words ‘at home’ in order to spell the word ‘Victorian’ (Interview 04/02/2011). Data transcription 7.13 (below) shows that later in the interview Colin claimed to have used ‘sounding out’ to spell the word ‘mangle’. I note that another child, India, was also present during the interview:

1	Lucy:	how did you know how to spell mangle
2	India:	[(What's a mangle)]
3	Colin:	[With my sounding out
4	Lucy:	Oh you sounded that one out
5		So you sounded out as M A N G L E
6	Colin	Yeah
7	Lucy:	I see

Data Transcription 7:13 Interview 04/02/2011

In this example, Colin used a helpful spelling strategy of copying words from a freely available classroom display. However, when asked about this by an adult he cited two other strategies – ‘learning words at home’ and ‘sounding out’. I suggest that Colin did not mention his use of the display because he perceived this as contravening the requirement to individually produce texts in schooled literacy tasks (Chapter 5: 5.3) and produce independent work in formal assessments (Chapter 1: 3.2.3.1). He thus deliberately displayed literacy competencies that he considered to be more appropriate within schooled literacy - those of learning spellings and using phonics - whilst concealing his own valued strategy for copying the spelling of the appropriate word from the wall display.

Examples 12 – 14 suggest that Amber Class' children's interpretive reproduction of docility involved making the use of literacy practices emphasised in the discourses and practices of schooled literacy available to adult *surveillance* and possible *examination*. However these schooled notions did not necessarily reflect what the children actually found helpful or meaningful when participating in schooled literacy tasks.

7.4.3 The constraints of schooled literacy

Amber Class children's interpretive reproduction of docility demonstrates that they were indeed aware of 'being always able to be seen' (Foucault 1977 p.187 Chapter 3: 3.1.2.2). However, the effect of children's awareness of ongoing *surveillance* was not necessarily to produce docile literate subjects. Rather, in accordance with what Corsaro would refer to as processes of 'interpretive reproduction,' (2005, 2011) the children incorporated *surveillance* into their practices of literacy. This enabled them to give the *appearance* of 'docility' when they considered it necessary, whilst continuing to maintain in-class peer culture values, attitudes and beliefs about how best to engage with schooled literacy tasks. This process, which I have termed 'the interpretive reproduction of docility' demonstrates how children's encounter with schooled literacy involves managing constraints upon their literacy practices that arise from the institutional imposition of normalised schooled expectations for young children's literacy practices (Chapter 1: 3.1.2.1).

Similar examples of managing such institutional constraints are found in other studies of children engaging with literacy in schooling. For example, Dixon (2011) observed a schooled reading activity in a South African elementary school. During this reading activity the children displayed the school required phonic skills even though a number of reasons made the use of phonics problematic for them. Dixon argues that, in schooled activities such as these:

> ‘Reading functions not as a meaning making exercise but as a demonstration of decoding skills…Reading is a public act that takes place in front of peers and a teacher.’
>
> [Dixon 2011 p.104]

In a further example from the UK, Maybin (2007) describes practises of literacy in a classroom of 10 – 11 year olds. She found that the children deliberately concealed some literacy practices from the teacher’s *surveillance*, in particular their continued use of vernacular literacies that had ‘somehow snuck into school…’ (Maybin 2007 p. 520). Lastly, Corsaro and Nelson (2003) describe how a child in an Italian elementary school drew a picture for her schooled writing task on a tissue with a felt pen, an implement forbidden in her elementary school. This tissue could be concealed quickly should anyone be watching her (Corsaro and Nelson 2003). The evidence from these studies supports the argument that young children in primary schooling are careful to make practices that are valued within schooling available to adult *surveillance*, whilst concealing those that are less valued.

Conclusion

This chapter has presented evidence which suggests that Amber Class children interpretively produced (cf Corsaro 2005, 2011) docility as part of their in-school literacy practices. This involved the children’s active management of the disciplinary practices of *surveillance* and the *examination* (cf Foucault 1977) in order to present themselves as docile subjects of schooled literacy to examining adults. This meant that the children’s engagement with literacy tasks in school could sometimes relate more to the need to manage institutional constraints arising from schooled expectations of ‘normal’ literate behaviour for young children rather than to literacy practices that were helpful in the reading and writing of texts.

This analysis further illustrates the need to adopt wider perspectives on the relationship between young children, literacy and schooling than are currently supported in the

dominant discourses of schooled literacy. In this thesis I have argued that the practices by which young children are taught to read and write in schools are informed by overly narrow conceptions of children's 'normal' literate behaviour as involving the application of a set of 'basic skills' that can be learned in a universal order (Chapter 3: 3.2.2; Chapter 4: 4.3). This means that the focus of schooled *surveillance* and *examination* is often limited to what adults think children *should* do when they practice literacy, rather than considering what the children *actually* find helpful in completing schooled literacy tasks (Chapter 1: 1.1). Schooled pedagogical practices then work to 'correct' literate behaviour that falls outside the range of this 'normal until it conforms to adult expectations.

I believe that such a perspective has the potential to have three significant effects on young children's in-school literacy acquisition. Firstly, the children's management of *surveillance* and the *examination* may mean that valuable aspects of children's literacy practices that children perceive as being less likely to be rewarded by adults in the classroom may not be made clearly visible to adults working in classrooms. This means that helpful aspects of children's literacy practices could be missed by those concerned with improving young children's in-school literacy acquisition and therefore go unsupported in schools' pedagogical practices.

Secondly, the children's adaptation of their in-school literacy practices in order to emphasise those aspects valued within schooled literacy may mean that, where a 'basic skills' discourse of literacy is dominant, some children begin to afford acquiring and applying 'basic skills' greater value than other aspects of their literacy practices. Thus they may not continue to develop their expertise in important aspects of literacy depicted in this thesis, such as managing complex social interactions and sharing relative expertise (Chapter 6: 6.3). This raises the question of the potential effects of constraining children's practices within overly narrow notions of 'normal' on young

children's capacity to engage in Literacy as a Social Practice (Street 1984), both within and beyond the schooled context.

Thirdly, the evidence in this chapter suggests that some children perceive differences between their own and schooled values, attitudes and beliefs about how to engage with literacy tasks. A concern here is that such perceptions of differences may lead to the children believing that the literacy they learn in school is for that social context only, and thus has less relevance to their lives outside of school. This may mean that the literacy children acquire in institutions of schooling may not be as transferrable or meaningful as is assumed within the dominant discourses of schooled literacy (cf Street 1984).

Therefore, I argue that schooled discourses and practices for supporting young children's literacy acquisition should incorporate a greater understanding of how young children practise literacy in their everyday lives both within school and beyond. This has the potential to facilitate the development of pedagogical practices that better support young children's acquisition of literacy in schools.

Chapter 8 Conclusion

In this thesis, I set out to challenge dominant assumptions about the relationship between young children, schooling and literacy that inform mainstream policy decisions about literacy education in England. In this chapter I offer a summary of my findings together with a consideration of the implications of those findings for UK literacy education.

My research began with the question:

What happens when young children encounter schooled literacy?

In addressing this question I have demonstrated that young children actively and creatively engage with schooled literacy curricula through the interpretive reproduction of literacy practices. Within the schooled context, these literacy practices incorporate the children's interpretations of the processes and practices that are used to organise the particular form of literacy they encounter in the classroom. For this reason, the literacy young children encounter in schooling cannot be separated from the institutional context which gives it its distinctive form. I have argued that both the distinctive nature of the literacy found in schools and young children's active, creative and adaptive engagement with it are insufficiently accounted for in the dominant discourses that inform current literacy education policy and practice. Within these discourses literacy is a straightforward set of 'basic skills', that all children acquire in a universal order that can then be applied to any context where literacy is required. From this perspective it is reasonable to focus the teaching of literacy on the acquisition of these skills and to measure the success of literacy education policy on the levels of skills that children have acquired. However the evidence in this thesis has demonstrated that this perspective omits much of what happens when young children encounter schooled literacy. I remind the reader that this question arose as a result of

my professional dissatisfaction with the limited attention paid to young children's active engagement with the processes of being taught literacy in school in education policy. The evidence I have presented in this thesis demonstrates that, no matter how thoroughly such polices are implemented, their chances of success are limited by the narrowness of their perspective on the relationship between young children, schools and literacy.

Below, in section 8.1, I offer an overview of the findings and conclusions arising from the evidence presented in this thesis. This is followed in section 8.2 by an account of the implications I believe this thesis has for UK education policy.

8.1 Thesis findings

Here I present an overview of my findings from the evidence presented in this thesis. They are organised into the following sections i) widening perspectives on young children, schooling and literacy; ii) the complexity of classroom literacy practices; iii) the peculiarities of schooled literacy; iv) young children's interpretive reproduction of schooled literacy practices; and v) the effects and possibilities of schooled literacy. I now turn to a discussion of each of these in turn in relation to the chapters in the thesis.

8.1.1 Widening perspectives on young children, schooling and literacy

Chapter 1 of this thesis suggested that educational perspectives on the relationship between young children, literacy and schooling could be widened by understanding literacy to be a social practice, contingent on *people's* values attitudes and beliefs about the *social contexts* in which they engage with texts (cf Street 1984, Barton and Hamilton 1998).

Since the *people* that this thesis is primarily concerned with are young children, William Corsaro's conceptualisation of children's engagement with the social world as involving

processes of interpretive reproduction (Corsaro, 2005, 2011) has sharpened my understanding of how young children in particular reproduce literacy practices. Furthermore, since this thesis is concerned with the *social context* of schooling, Foucault's (1977) conceptualisation of schools as disciplinary institutions has demonstrated how young children's in-school literacy practices are constrained by the dominant discourses of schooled literacy. These theoretical lenses, when applied to the relationship between young children, schooling and literacy, offer a way of repositioning the 'basic skills' that are so valued in dominant social and cultural discourses of literacy (cf Clark and Ivanic 1997; Barton 2007; Papen 2016) within practices of literacy which are imbued with young children's values, attitudes and beliefs about both literacy itself and the social context of schooling (Barton and Hamilton 1998; Purcell-Gates, Jacobson and Degener 2004). In this thesis this perspective has offered fresh insights into young children's encounter with schooled literacy – in particular how young children perceive the process of being taught to read and write in school, and how the practices and procedures of organising the literacy curriculum in schools affect the literacy practices young children reproduce there. I argue that this perspective can be usefully applied to those areas of educational research and policy which seek to address current concerns within the UK government and media about 'standards' and 'achievement' in literacy education in ways that I shall discuss throughout this concluding chapter.

8.1.2 The complexity of classroom literacy practices

My research aimed to place the complex literacy practices I found in a Year 1 classroom in North West London at the centre of my enquiry into young children's encounter with schooled literacy. In order to meet this aim I adopted an ethnographic approach to my research (described in **Chapter 2**), which enabled me to remain open to new interpretations and ideas as I collected and analysed my data. I could thus apply the wider perspectives described in **Chapter 1** of the thesis to my observations of young children practising literacy in the classroom and, in doing so, firstly reconsider

the assumptions about young children, schooling and literacy that I had found so limiting in my professional life; and secondly explore alternative ways of understanding what the children were doing. My interpretations of what was happening in Amber Classroom therefore arose from my observations of what the children did, rather than pre-existing categories and concepts from the dominant discourses of schooled literacy.

In **Chapter 2** I described how my collection of data such as fieldnotes and digital recordings over a year of participant observation in a North West London Primary School enabled me to capture the moment-by-moment unfolding of young children's literacy practices in Amber Classroom. Additional data - including interviews with the children, the collection of documents such as the texts they engaged with, and photographs of the classroom environment - supported my understanding of what I had observed. The mass of data generated in this way, over thirty weekly visits to Amber Class, meant that I was able to firstly identify, and secondly engage in, an in-depth micro-analysis of some key classroom incidents. This painstaking, slow method of analysis enabled me to make room for the unexpected (Rampton 2007) and place the children's literacy practices at the centre of the analysis. Whilst this research approach was necessarily time-consuming and complex it offered a deeper perspective on young children's engagement with schooled literacy than that currently allowed within the dominant discourses of schooled literacy.

This ethnographic approach to data collection and analysis found that the children in Amber Class' engagement with schooled literacy was a complex process involving: i) social interaction; ii) working within and around the constraints of the dominant schooled literacy; iii) the negotiation of tensions between differing values, attitudes and beliefs about literacy that co-exist in classroom contexts; and iv) the creative adaptation of literacy skills and knowledge to meet the demands of schooled literacy tasks. Two theoretical perspectives helped me to explore these complex practices: firstly

Foucault's theorisation of the processes and procedures of schooling as 'disciplinary technologies'; and secondly Corsaro's theory of children's socialisation into society and culture as 'interpretive reproduction'. The next two chapters of the thesis (**Chapters 3 and 4**) described these in some detail in relation to my ethnographic data.

8.1.3 The peculiarities of schooled literacy

The work in this thesis to make explicit the relationship between the dominant discourses of schooled literacy and the everyday schooled practices that young children encounter in the classroom demonstrates that, if such discourses are to be challenged effectively, a careful consideration of how they are naturalised through the everyday practices and procedures of schooling is required. Within these dominant discourses, schooling moves children from ignorance to competence in literacy as they progress along a universal pathway of the acquisition of 'basic skills' in reading and writing. However, from the perspective of Literacy as a Social Practice (LSP), the type of literacy dominant in schooling is *context* embedded and imbued with *ideology* (cf Street 1984). In this thesis, applying a Foucauldian perspective has supported an understanding of how these *ideologies* of schooling are enacted in the mundane, everyday organisational practices and procedures that shape the institutional *context*. These everyday procedures and practices are usually described within schools using terms such as 'assessment', 'observation', 'differentiation' and 'standards'. In **Chapter 3** of this thesis I demonstrated how the application of Foucault's concepts enabled me to recast these everyday practices in Foucauldian terms of *examination*, *surveillance*, *ranking,* and *normalising judgement* (Foucault 1977) and in doing so denaturalise them and make their relationship to the distinctive literacy found in schooling explicit. This work demonstrated that the dominant discourses of schooling, that I felt were too narrow to sufficiently account for the complexity of young children's classroom literacy practices, are nevertheless able to act directly on those practices through the everyday procedures and practices of schooling. In doing so they are made visible to young children encountering schooled literacy and thus likely to be incorporated into their

developing literacy practices. The subsequent chapters of the thesis (**Chapters 4 – 7)** set out to explore young children's literacy practices in a social context where such discourses were dominant.

8.1.4 Young children's interpretive reproduction of schooled literacy practices

Foucault's theorisation offered a way of conceptualising how dominant discourses of young children, schooling and literacy are brought to act directly on the literacy practices that young children develop in schooled contexts. However a Foucauldian account of schooled literacy does not include sufficient focus on what young children might do when they encounter this distinctive form of literacy. **Chapters 4 - 7** of the thesis offered such an account, examining how young children in Amber Classroom interpretively reproduced literacy practices in their engagement with schooled literacy tasks. In this account, a Literacy as a Social (LSP) practice perspective enabled more of the complexity of the children's literacy practices to be seen, including their values, attitudes and beliefs about literacy and schooling which were not necessarily aligned with those maintained by the disciplinary technologies they encountered in the classroom. The addition of Corsaro's theorisation of children as active members of society, engaged in the 'interpretive reproduction' (Corsaro 2005, 2011) of social practices enabled a view of how this LSP perspective applied to young children. Firstly, it offered a way of capturing the children's active, creative engagement with schooled literacy tasks in the social context of the classroom and secondly it emphasised the importance of young children's in-class peer culture perceptions of literacy in these processes.

My study of Amber Class children's literacy practices in **Chapters 4 - 7** showed that schooled assumptions about literacy as a universal set of basic skills that are learnt in order and then applied to reading and writing tasks do not sufficiently account for what young children do when they encounter such tasks in the classroom. For example, in **Chapter 4** my analysis of one child's literacy practices within a schooled writing lesson

demonstrated that the schooled assumptions about what could be expected from young children engaging in writing tasks simply did not account for the complex practices of literacy she reproduced. Both **Chapter 4** and the subsequent chapters demonstrated that, as well as including the application of the 'basic skills' the children were being taught and examined for, these literacy practices also: i) involved the creative adaptation of those skills to meet the requirements of the task set; ii) enacted the children's values, attitudes and beliefs about both literacy and schooling; iii) were often reproduced and shared between children through social interaction within their in-class peer culture; and iv) incorporated the children's negotiation of differing values, attitudes and beliefs about literacy that co-existed in the social world of the classroom. What I found striking about the processes of interpretive reproduction described in **Chapters 4 - 7** is that, even when schooled discourses and practices were dominant, the youngest children in mass systems of state education were finding ways of managing their encounter with schooled literacy that enabled them to maintain their own priorities for successful social practice.

It is interesting to note that, whilst this study was not designed to track the development of young children's literacy practices over time, there was certainly a sense of changes to those practices across the year. Of course, schooling is designed to affect young children's development of literacy practices in terms of ensuring they acquire more and more 'basic skills' on their universal path to literacy. However there is a sense in the data that the children's ongoing interpretations of their encounter with schooling led to changes in the ways they practised literacy in class, not just in relation to their acquisition of 'basic skills' but also in their adaptation of their practices to meet what they understood to be requirements of schooled literacy whilst maintaining their own priorities. An interesting area for further research would therefore be to examine in more detail how the organisational aspects of schooled literacy affect young children's literacy practices over time, particularly in terms of the values, attitudes and beliefs they develop about literacy and their developing literate identities.

8.1.5 The effects and possibilities of teaching literacy in institutions of mass schooling

These findings about young children's interpretive reproduction of literacy practices informed my close examination of what it is like to be a young child being taught to read and write in an early twenty first century classroom in England. This approach offered some important insights into the effects and possibilities of the teaching of literacy within systems of mass schooling. I shall discuss these effects and possibilities here in relation to **Chapters 4 - 7** of the thesis.

8.1.5.1 The effect of schooling on young children's literacy practices

Chapters 4 - 7 offered examples of particular effects the social context of schooling had on young children's interpretive reproduction of literacy practices. For example, one effect of the UK system of mass schooling is the creation of conditions that enable young children's classroom peer cultures to flourish. In Foucauldian terms, the schooled *seriation* of literacy knowledge and *normalisation* of children's rates of progress in acquisition of that knowledge in terms of their chronological age means that it is sensible to organise large groups of children into same-age classes. This thesis has shown how these groups of young children form in-class peer cultures, within which they develop shared and stable practices that allow them to manage their encounter with schooled literacy. **Chapter 5** showed that one such literacy practice in Amber Classroom was that of peer-to-peer copying. Within the children's in-class peer culture, this was a valued way of sharing literacy expertise through re-transcribing aspects such as spellings of key words from another child's work into one's own. However an effect of the location of this literacy practice in the classroom context meant that, in order for this valued peer culture practice to go ahead, the children had to manage a schooled disapproval of peer-to-peer copying arising from the ongoing schooled need to examine children's *individual* literacy proficiency. The practice therefore incorporated a set of social requirements that needed to be met before peer-to-peer copying could take place in the classroom, one of which was that there should

be a low risk of adult *surveillance*. Such examples of young children's interpretive reproduction of literacy practices demonstrate the effects of schooled organisational procedures and practices on young children's interpretive reproduction of literacy practices and in doing so add a level of complexity to young children's encounter with schooled literacy which is not accounted for in the dominant discourses and practices of schooled literacy.

8.1.5.2 Peer culture sharing of expertise

The evidence presented in **Chapters 4 - 6** of young children's ability to share expertise through practices such as peer-to-peer copying opens up possibilities not only for supporting children's literacy acquisition through encouraging such sharing of expertise but also to secure useful skills of independent learning, critical thinking and teamwork. For example, each chapter showed that positive social relations between children led to the peer culture sharing of literacy expertise that involved: i) complex interactional work to share relative expertise successfully; ii) skills of negotiation and compromise; iii) sensitivity and tact when working with peers; iv) the careful identification of specific areas of need; and v) the sharing of knowledge concerning 'basic skills' of literacy such as spelling, sentence structure and vocabulary – all of which seem desirable effects for a literacy curriculum.

Thus examples from my data demonstrate how, within the children's peer culture, literacy can be a collective accomplishment achieved through social interaction and stable and shared social conventions. This is not to say that children's in-class peer culture practices of literacy are always ideal. There are examples in my data where children find managing a diversity of literacy expertise challenging in group tasks, share misunderstandings of the task or develop rivalries and negative social relationships, all of which affect their in- class peer culture literacy practices. However, the evidence in this thesis suggests the possibilities of in-class peer culture literacy could be emphasised and supported within schooled literacy in ways that recognise those

possibilities and support children in capitalising on them. This thesis has shown that one way of supporting these practices is to consider how they are affected by the application of the disciplinary technologies of schooling. Below, I offer a summary of some of these effects as demonstrated by the evidence in this thesis.

8.1.5.3 Competition and access restrictions to sharing expertise within the peer culture

Chapters 5 – 7 demonstrated an effect of the schooled practices of *examination* and *ranking* on the children's interpretive reproduction of literacy practices was to prompt competitive participation in schooled literacy tasks. The analysis of the children's peer-to-peer copying practice in **Chapter 5** showed that an effect of the schooled emphasis on examining young children's *individual* literacy proficiency was to prompt children to practice literacy competitively. The special conditions the children applied that allowed peer-to-peer copying to go ahead in Amber Classroom included the need for permission to be explicitly sought and granted if particular features of a child's written text features were to be shared with a third party. The data presented showed that at least some of the children refused such permission when they felt that the copying of particular linguistic features would enable their peers to gain equivalent or greater success than themselves in *examinations* of their work. Evidence in this thesis of such competitive participation in schooled literacy tasks suggested that whilst the grouping of a large number of children together offered the possibility of in-class peer culture support for literacy acquisition, an effect of the ongoing *examination* and *ranking* of individual children's literacy expertise placed conditions on that support that restricted the ways in which children could gain access to it.

The effect of schooled literacy practices on restricting some children's access to valuable shared practices of literacy was demonstrated again in **Chapter 6** where the data showed that at least some children excluded particular peers, often those 'lower down' in the schooled *ranking* of literacy 'ability', from shared literacy activities. This restriction seemed to arise from a concern within the children's in-class peer culture

that the inputs of children with 'lower' levels of literacy expertise had the potential to secure a less favourable *examination* of the group's literacy proficiency. This was particularly seen in the behaviour of a group of three children who were set a shared literacy task. One of the children in the group was new both to the school and to speaking English. The other two children in the group were initially careful to ensure this child accompanied them to the table at which they were to work and sat with them as they engaged in the task set. However, once they embarked on the literacy task itself no further attempt was made to include her in the activity. I argued that this change in behaviour by these two children could be attributed to their perception of a need to secure a favourable outcome for their engagement with the task. They therefore did not include the third child because she was considered to lack the relevant expertise to support this aim. Thus, the ongoing *examination* and consequent *ranking* of young children's literacy proficiency led to children considered to have less literacy expertise having reduced access to in-class peer culture practices of shared engagement with schooled literacy tasks that were designed to improve their literacy acquisition. This suggests that, in order to realise the potential of young children to support each other's literacy acquisition through shared engagement with schooled literacy tasks, it will be necessary to consider the effect of the organisational procedures and practices of schooling on such shared engagement.

8.1.5.4 The ranking of young children

Chapter 6 also showed further effects of the teaching of literacy within systems of mass schooling. It demonstrated that the longstanding schooled practice of *ranking* children according to literacy 'ability' was understood differently by the adults and children in Amber classroom. Education policy makers and teachers see this practice of *ranking* (more usually called 'grouping' or 'setting') as a way of tailoring the curriculum to meet children's specific needs (usually called 'differentiation'). However, within Amber Class' children's peer culture, there was confusion as to the reasons and purposes of the various groupings of children arising from this schooled *ranking*. At

least some of the children attributed their particular grouping within the class to whether or not they had worked hard enough, got their learning 'into their heads' or 'botched up' various literacy tasks – thus linking it to their moral worth. They also competed with each other for higher positions in the schooled *rankings* and used them as a tool to determine who could be included or excluded from particular literacy tasks. Thus the effects of the schooled literacy practice of *ranking* children by 'ability' included: i) prompting the development of certain literate identities; ii) supporting competitive participation in schooled literacy activities; and iii) creating specific conditions for access to schooled literacy tasks. The chapter showed firstly that young children's in-school literacy practices may be reproduced as a result of those children's interpretations of the organisational practices of schooling and secondly that such interpretations may differ from those of adults engaged in the teaching of schooled literacy. It is therefore important for those implementing schooled literacy curricula in the classroom to be aware of how young children are interpreting that curriculum and what effect these interpretations are having on the literacy practices they produce. This is not to say that schools should not organise children through longstanding practices of grouping and differentiation, however it is to say that more research is required into their effects on young children's literacy practices in order for their implementation in classrooms to be adapted more effectively.

8.1.5.5 Managing the application of discipline

The evidence presented in **Chapters 5 - 7** suggests that a potential effect of the ongoing surveillance of young children's literacy practices in schools is to prompt at least some children to give the appearance of subjecting themselves to schooled literacy whilst continuing to maintain in-class peer culture values, attitudes and beliefs about how best to manage their encounter with literacy in schooling. The chapters showed that, alongside their acquisition of 'basic skills' in schooling, at least some of the children in Amber Class were learning to manage the application of discipline in ways that enabled them to maintain their own priorities in contexts where schooled

literacy's views of literacy and schooling were dominant. In **Chapter 7** I termed such practices 'the interpretive reproduction of docility' and suggested that this involved the children creating displays of alignment with what the children interpreted as being the schooled expectations for 'normal' literate behaviour. One effect of such work was to create divisions within the children's classroom peer culture. For example, as well as the restrictions on access to shared literacy tasks described above, some children competed to present themselves as more compliant with schooled literacy requirements – that is, more 'docile' - than their peers. To do so they engaged in social interaction designed to secure favourable comparisons by adults between their own literacy practices and those of their peers. A further effect of the children's interpretive reproduction of docility was that children made deliberate displays of literacy practices that were understood to be the most valued in schooled examinations of literacy competence. Of particular interest in **Chapter 7** was one child's assertion that he was using phonics to spell when he had been observed copying words from a wall display. Such behaviour suggests that some children may perceive their engagement with schooled literacy to involve displaying alignment with particular practices of literacy in one's own classroom practices, even when these are not the most efficient or useful way of engaging with the task set. This raises questions about firstly the potential effects of constraining young children's in-school literacy practices within an overly narrow notion of 'normal' literate behaviour: and secondly how transferrable the 'basic skills' acquired in schooled contexts might be if they are tied to the children's perceptions of what is required to satisfy the ongoing schooled examination of their literacy proficiency.

To end this broad summary of my thesis findings, it is important to add a cautionary note about the implications of the evidence presented in this thesis. This thesis' challenge to the dominant discourses of schooled literacy is not to replace one set of assumptions about young children, schooling and literacy with another. Rather, it is to offer a more robust conceptual framework for understanding what young children do

when they practice literacy in schooled contexts. My findings suggest that widening perspectives on the relationship between young children, schooling and literacy can enable those concerned with young children's literacy acquisition to gain a broader and deeper understanding of firstly the diversity of literacy practices in schools; and secondly their effects and possibilities for young children's acquisition. Current policy initiatives in England's literacy education rely on the notion that there is a universal pathway to literacy for all children and a universal 'best practice' through which all schools can secure aspirational literacy levels for all children. However the evidence in this thesis suggests that it may be more productive to consider how educational policy and practice can acknowledge and work effectively with a diversity of literacy practices, teaching approaches and experiences.

I now draw on the findings of this thesis to consider some implications of my work for literacy education in UK schools.

8.2 Implications of my thesis findings for literacy education in English Primary Schools

This thesis has demonstrated that 'schools transform what they come into contact with' (Moss 2001p.155). For many children, this transformation is positive. The evidence in this thesis has shown children making progress in acquiring and applying 'basic skills' in literacy, developing positive social relationships with a diversity of children and adults, and enjoying participating in classroom life. However, there is also evidence that insufficient attention is paid in English Literacy education policy to the active, creative and adaptive abilities of young children, and the effects of the processes and procedures that enable schools to act on the literacy practices those children reproduce in schools. The attention I have paid in this thesis to these aspects of the relationship between young children, schooling and literacy has generated findings that

I believe have implications for literacy education in English primary schools, as I shall discuss here.

Firstly, educational practices aimed at supporting children's literacy acquisition would benefit from paying greater attention firstly to what it is like to be a young child in the social world; and secondly to the uses young children might have for literacy in that world. The young children in Amber Classroom were purposeful practitioners of literacy in the social world of the classroom. However, current educational practices position young children as *acquiring* rather than *practising* literacy and in doing so run the risk of failing to capitalise on young children's interest in using literacy in their everyday lives. For example, in the current schooled context, the focus on skills and knowledge associated with print literacy disregards young children's values for engaging with multimodal texts and using rapidly changing digital technologies. These literacies are often seen as the prerogative of older children or as a distraction from literacy acquisition. However they are integral to the ways in which literacy is used outside of schooling and to the ways in which young children use literacy in their everyday lives. This lack of concern within current literacy education policy for relevance to children's current needs and interests means that young children may come to see the literacy they learn in school as being irrelevant to their lives outside of school. This is not to say that 'basic skills' in literacy should not form part of literacy curricula. Young children are relatively inexperienced literacy practitioners who do need to acquire such 'basic skills' to support their social practices of literacy. However it is to say that these 'basic skills' should be positioned within wider conceptualisations of Literacy as a Social Practice in a diverse and ever changing social world.

Furthermore, young children, their families and communities may not share the same values, attitudes and beliefs about schooling, literacy and young children that are assumed by those working within the field of education. Thus, it is important that those working in education recognise that schooled notions of 'normal' are not fixed, but open

to question, challenge and change. However this recognition should be qualified by an understanding of the dominance of the literacy learned in school on wider social perceptions of educational success. Work needs to be done therefore, not just to recognise and support diverse practices of literacy, but also to persuade young children of the usefulness of schooled literacy to their lives. This means that children do not just need explicit teaching of how to practise literacy but explanations of why they are doing it and the situation of more technical 'basic skills' teaching in activities and practices that young children can understand the relevance of. Such work would require institutions of schooling to adopt a more open minded, flexible and adaptable attitude to literacy in order to account for the diversity of literacy practices in schooled populations and the ongoing evolution of language and literacy in everyday life. Of particular use would be to open conversations with young children and their families about what literacy means to them, what they require from their literacy practices, and how they view the literacy they acquire in schooling. Such conversations have the potential to have a positive effect on the ways in which schools can work to secure relevant and appropriate literacy curricula.

The evidence in this thesis also suggests a need for a critical appraisal of the effects of the organisational processes and procedures that have been used to organise literacy curricula in schooling since the beginning of compulsory education in the UK in the nineteenth century. Firstly, this thesis raises the possibility that such organisational practices and procedures may create some of the problems that literacy curricula are designed to solve. For example, in English literacy education policy of the past three decades, much attention has been paid to the so-called 'long tail of underachievement' where a portion of the population, around 20%, are thought to leave school with insufficient levels of literacy. However, in any system of organisation where hierarchical *ranking* by literacy expertise is integral to the organisation of diverse populations of young children, there will always be a percentage of children occupying the lower ranks. This thesis has demonstrated that the highly explicit implementation of

disciplinary technologies such as *ranking* in classrooms leads some children to associate the literacy they learn in schools with competition, processes of inclusion and exclusion and evaluations of their moral worth. Whilst these associations might spur some children on to higher attainment, as we have seen in the case of the children's work to learn spellings and progress through Book Band levels; it is of concern that some children, particularly those in the lower ranks, find such processes difficult to manage, begin to perceive themselves as 'botching up' and to be viewed by their peers as less worthy to be included in certain schooled literacy tasks. This suggests that the 'long tail of underachievement' which is of such concern to British policy makers may not be entirely related to the pedagogical practices of individual schools or the children's cultural and social backgrounds, as is often assumed by those policy makers. My evidence suggests it may also be partly an effect of the way in which young children are organised in the institution of schooling.

Furthermore, the evidence in this thesis suggests that the explicit deployment of disciplinary technologies in classrooms can have unforeseen effects on schools' efforts to secure valuable skills for young children. I have shown that some of the youngest children in English schools can sensitively share literacy expertise, negotiate solutions to problems, engage positively with the diversity of school populations and have a concern for each other's successful completion of schooled literacy tasks. Such skills were explicitly supported within Oakwood Primary School's pedagogical approaches, as they are in the English primary schools of my experience. However, such pedagogical approaches are deployed within institutional contexts where disciplinary technologies, in particular those of the *examination* and *ranking*, are also highly visible. This thesis has demonstrated how such technologies emphasise individual engagement with literacy and introduce values of competition and individual achievement into young children's encounter with schooled literacy. In doing so they cause the children to place conditions of access on processes of shared engagement

with schooled literacy tasks which support the development of the valuable skills highlighted above.

This is not to say that schools should abandon the use of disciplinary technologies to organise both the literacy curriculum and the schooled population. After all, compulsory schooling at a national level is an enormous and complex undertaking. However it is to say that policy makers need to give greater consideration to the effects of organisational procedures on young children's practices of literacy. If these are better understood then the same procedures could be deployed in ways that support the aspirations that schools and education systems have for their pupils.

These considerations suggest that a crucial area for policy consideration is how those who are directly involved with supporting young children's literacy acquisition in classrooms are supported in undertaking this highly skilled and complex task. Of late, training for personnel in English schools, such as teachers and teaching assistants, has focused increasingly on ensuring they have the subject knowledge required to teach 'basic skills', in particular phonics, to children. However this thesis has shown that those working closely with young children in classrooms would be supported by training to recognise how such 'basic skills' are situated within wider social processes – literacy practices – and to consider the relationship between those practices and children's acquisition of literacy when planning literacy curricula. To support teachers in this, training in teaching early literacy could include aspects such as: i) recognising and managing a diversity of literacy practices; ii) the potential effects of classroom management strategies on children's perceptions of schooled literacy; iii) careful observations of what the children in their care do when engaged in schooled literacy tasks; iv) reflecting on their own assumptions of what is 'normal' for literacy practices in the light of their classroom observations; and v) having high expectations for young children's creative, critical and purposeful engagement with schooled literacy. This would require a recognition within government policy that teaching early literacy to the

youngest children in schooling is a highly skilled and complex undertaking that cannot be addressed within current policy discourses that oversimplify literacy, the people who practise it and the social contexts in which it is practised.

A final note…

I was lucky to gain access to Oakwood Primary School to carry out my research. In an educational climate where both teachers' and children's 'performance' in the classroom are subjected to scrutiny, judged, and ranked in the ways that Foucault described, the presence of an observer in the classroom can often be perceived as at the least, uncomfortable and at the most, threatening. However the welcoming, supportive atmosphere of staff, children and their families at Oakwood Primary School made it possible for me to carry out what I consider to be a valuable piece of research about young children encountering literacy in schools.

Working on this thesis has particularly highlighted for me how approaches to teaching literacy in schools advocated in current UK educational policy omit the complex human aspects of schooling and literacy, in particular the way these phenomena are understood and managed in young children's everyday school lives. Foucault's description of schools as 'learning machines' (Foucault 1977 p.147) seems to apply more than ever as school accountability systems increasingly rely on measuring and quantifying children's use of 'basic skills' over and above all other aspects of literacy. The high stakes elements of the testing regimes at the centre of these systems pressure schools to restrict their literacy curricula to securing such 'basic skills' at the expense of offering a literacy curriculum that is relevant to the needs of children in the twenty first century. In particular, the 'programmes of study' that refer to the youngest children in the current English National Curriculum for English (DfE 2013) pay relatively little attention to essential aspects of literacy practices such as the social relationships involved in engaging with texts; the adaptive and flexible skills required to engage in literacy across a range of social contexts; the ability to engage with texts critically; the

diversity of language and literacy practices; and the ability to access and use the technologies that have become increasingly central to people's lives.

The outcome of this seems to be that, rather than being supported by education policies and systems; both teachers and children often have to work around them as best they can. I believe that research such as mine, which understands Literacy as a Social Practice, offers ways of exploring what people need from a literacy education, and how they use literacy in their daily lives, both in- and out- of work and school. Corsaro's conceptualisation of the active creativity of young children in their participation in the social world allows for those concerned with young children's acquisition of literacy to begin from an assumption that young children are creative, adaptive and purposeful literacy practitioners. This approach offers a degree of open-mindedness, flexibility and adaptability about literacy practices that has the potential to manage and understand diversity and complexity, rather than pretending it doesn't exist or positioning it as a problem. In this way, the literacy that young children encounter in schooling can be opened up to offer a curriculum that is more relevant and appropriate to the diversity of creative and adaptive young children in English classrooms.

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Appendix A. **Ethical Approval**

A.1 Letter from Ethics Panel

Lucy Henning,
Department of Education & Professional Studies,
23rd June 2010

Dear Lucy,

REP(EM)/09/10-45 'The classroom practices of Year 1 pupils learning to read and write'

I am pleased to inform you that the above application has been reviewed by the E&M Research Ethics Panel that FULL APPROVAL is now granted.

Please ensure that you follow all relevant guidance as laid out in the King's College London *Guidelines on Good Practice in Academic Research* (http://www.kcl.ac.uk/college/policyzone/attachments/good_practice_May_08_FINAL.pdf).

For your information ethical approval is granted until 22nd July 2012. If you need approval beyond this point you will need to apply for an extension to approval at least two weeks prior to this explaining why the extension is needed, (please note however that a full re-application will not be necessary unless the protocol has changed). You should also note that if your approval is for one year, you will not be sent a reminder when it is due to lapse.

If you do not start the project within three months of this letter please contact the Research Ethics Office. Should you need to modify the project or request an extension to approval you will need approval for this and should follow the guidance relating to modifying approved applications: http://www.kcl.ac.uk/research/ethics/applicants/modifications.html

Any unforeseen ethical problems arising during the course of the project should be reported to the approving committee/panel. In the event of an untoward event or an adverse reaction a full report must be made to the Chairman of the approving committee/review panel within one week of the incident.

Please would you also note that we may, for the purposes of audit, contact you from time to time to ascertain the status of your research.

If you have any query about any aspect of this ethical approval, please contact your panel/committee administrator in the first instance (http://www.kcl.ac.uk/research/ethics/contacts.html). We wish you every success with this work.

Yours sincerely

_____

Daniel Butcher
Research Ethics Administrator

A.2 Letter to Head

Dear Ms.,

I am writing to request permission to conduct a study in your school as part of my PHD research.

In this study, I am interested in learning more about the literacy practices of Year 1 pupils in classrooms. I would like to visit a Year 1 classroom for one morning a week during the next academic year (2010 – 2011). However, it would be helpful to begin my study in September 2010 with a week in the class in order to familiarise myself with the routines and structures of school life. I am happy to negotiate with the teacher as to which times would be appropriate, although I would like one literacy lesson to be part of my regular morning visits.

As part of my data gathering, I would like to make video and audio recordings of literacy practices in lessons. I envisage making audio and video recordings from time to time of specific episodes in which pupils are engaged with reading and writing practices so that I can later analyse these in detail. I envisage making video recordings once or twice a term at most, whilst audio recordings may be more frequent. I am happy to come into school prior to the start of my fieldwork to discuss this with parents and staff and answer any of their questions. All data will only be used for academic purposes and will only be viewed by myself and possibly other people with an academic interest. Participants will have the right to withdraw from the study at any time.

I would also like to interview the parents of some children studied as well as the children themselves, the class teacher and any other adults working in the classroom. These interviews will take place over the academic year and will be around a maximum of an hour in length. All information will be kept confidential. The identity of the school and of any teachers, pupils or parents will be anonymised to ensure that the data cannot be traced back to the school or the original participants.

I have worked in education as a primary teacher and consultant for many years and have completed the CRB check for the local authority for which I currently work. I am happy to help out in the classroom if the teacher would like.

I am attaching copies of the consent forms and information sheets for the participants in the study for your information.

I appreciate your consideration of my request and look forward to hearing from you soon.

Yours sincerely

Lucy Henning

A.3 Information Sheet for Staff

INFORMATION SHEET FOR TEACHERS

REC Protocol Number: **REP(EM)/09/10-45**

YOU WILL BE GIVEN A COPY OF THIS INFORMATION SHEET

'The classroom practices of Year 1 pupils learning to read and write'
I would like to invite you to participate in a research project as part of my PHD studies. Before you decide whether you want to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what your participation will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish.

I am currently a postgraduate research student at Kings College, London. I have worked in education for over twenty years as a class teacher and literacy consultant. I have been checked, as have all adults working with children, by the Criminal Records Bureau and hold Qualified Teacher Status.

Please ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.
The project will involve my visiting the class once a week throughout the next academic year in order to study the literacy practices of children in classrooms. It is hoped that this research will enable education practitioners to understand why some children underachieve in literacy and what can be done to help them.

As part of the research, from time to time, I will make audio and videotapes of the children and yourself working in the classroom. Video recording will only take place for a maximum of twice a term; audio recording will be more frequent. The aim of these recordings is to help me analyse literacy practices in more detail. I will be able to replay the recordings many times in order to apply different interpretive frameworks and consider alternative analyses as the project develops. I will also be able to cross reference and compare recordings as I develop my project. The recordings may be shared with other researchers at Kings College, London, and will only be used for academic purposes. Copies of these recordings will be made available to you and the parents of the children throughout the project if you should so wish.

In the course of the study, a few children will be chosen as a focus for the research. Video and audio recordings as well as observation notes will therefore focus on these children. Once these children have been selected, their parents will decide whether or not they would like their child to be a focus of the study.

I also hope to carry out audio-recorded interviews with children, parents and staff at the school, including you. I am also interested in collecting information about how the curriculum and assessment relates to the way the children behave when they are learning to read and write. All data will be anonymised. Teachers and Pupils will only be identified by pseudonym in my work and the name and precise location of the school will also be changed. These steps will ensure that it will not be possible to identify any specific individual in my research.

I can be contacted at lucy.henning@kcl.ac.uk if you have any further questions.
It is up to you to decide whether you want to take part or not. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason up until July 2012.
If this study has harmed you in any way you can contact King's College London using the details of my supervisor below for further advice and information:

Dr. Roxy Harris: roxy.harris@kcl.ac.uk

A.4 Information Sheet for Parents

INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARENTS

REC Protocol Number: **REP(EM)/09/10-45**

YOU WILL BE GIVEN A COPY OF THIS INFORMATION SHEET

'The classroom practices of Year 1 children learning to read and write.'

My name is Lucy Henning and I am a student who is interested in finding out how Year 1 children learn to read and write. The head teacher is happy for me to carry out research for my project in your child's classroom.

Please take time to read the information below about the project and discuss it with others if you wish. If you have any questions, I can be contacted by e-mail at lucy.henning@kcl.ac.uk.

I would like to watch your children as they learn to read and write during their time in Year 1. I will be in class for about one morning a week. Mostly I will just make notes about what I see the children do when learning to read and write.

When I have been in the classroom for a little while, I will select two or three children to watch more closely. These children will be chosen because they are doing or saying things which are helpful in helping me to understand what children do as they learn to read and write. My observations will focus more closely on these children and I may spend more time talking to them. This will not affect their studies in any way. As soon as the children are selected, I will let their parents know who they are. If I select your child it will be up to you whether you agree to your child being more closely observed by me as they do their reading and writing.

Occasionally, I will video and audio record your children and their teacher as they work on reading and writing. This is to help me remember what I have seen. It will also mean I can look again at the recordings and think more carefully about what they might mean. I may also wish at some point in the study to interview you and your child about reading and writing. I might want to share these recordings with other people who are interested in how children learn to read and write such as the staff at the university. If I make a recording of you or your child, you are welcome to ask me to see or hear it afterwards.

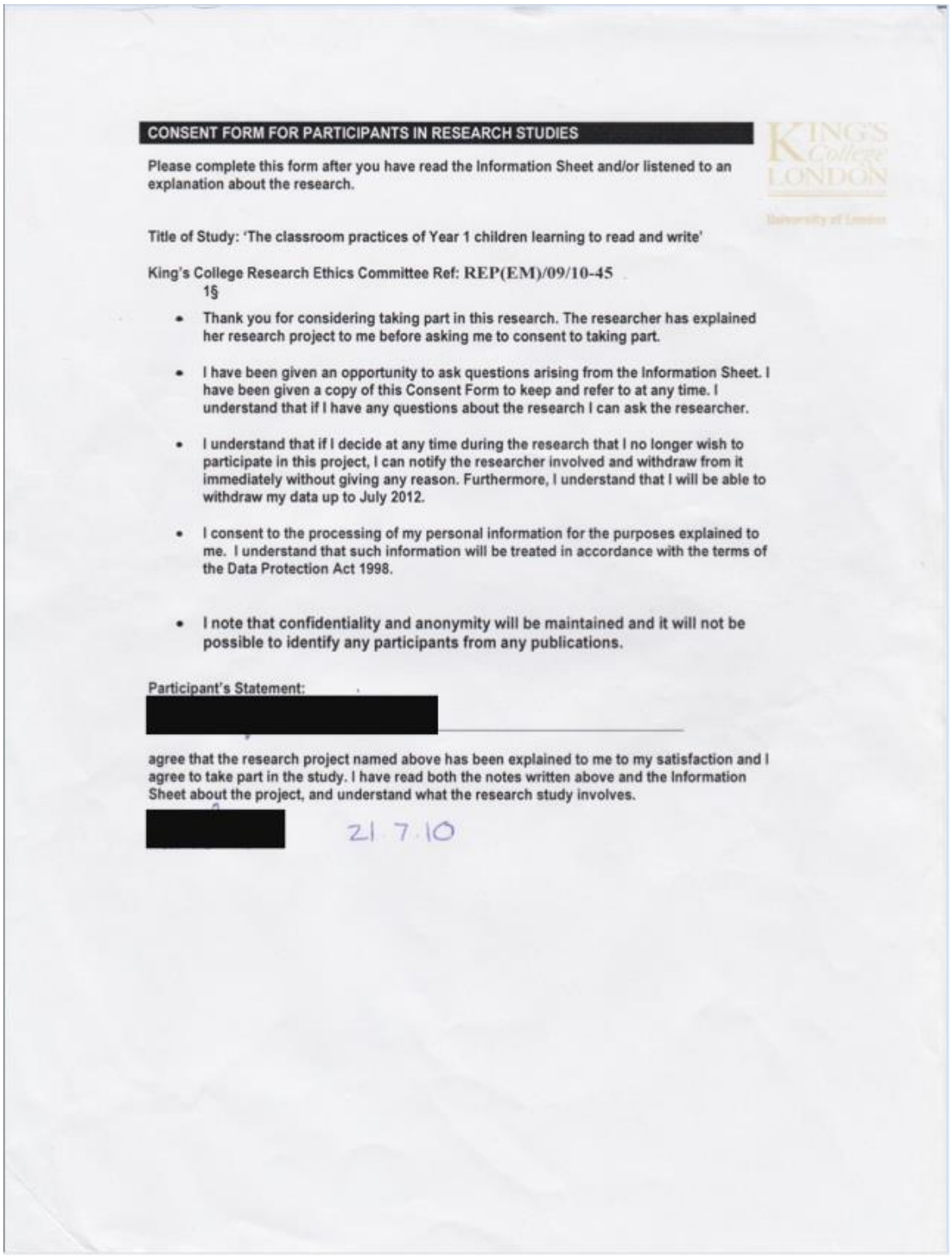
All the details of the school, the pupils and the teachers who help with the research will be kept anonymous. Nobody will be able to trace the research back to the people who helped with it.

It's up to you to decide whether or not you want your child to take part. If you do not want your child to take part this will not disadvantage your child at school in any way. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason up until July 2012.

If you feel the study has harmed you in any way you can contact Kings College, London, using the details of my research supervisor below:

Dr. Roxy Harris: roxy.harris@kcl.ac.uk

A.5 Consent form for staff



CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS IN RESEARCH STUDIES

Please complete this form after you have read the Information Sheet and/or listened to an explanation about the research.

Title of Study: 'The classroom practices of Year 1 children learning to read and write'

King's College Research Ethics Committee Ref: REP(EM)/09/10-45

1§

- Thank you for considering taking part in this research. The researcher has explained her research project to me before asking me to consent to taking part.
- I have been given an opportunity to ask questions arising from the Information Sheet. I have been given a copy of this Consent Form to keep and refer to at any time. I understand that if I have any questions about the research I can ask the researcher.
- I understand that if I decide at any time during the research that I no longer wish to participate in this project, I can notify the researcher involved and withdraw from it immediately without giving any reason. Furthermore, I understand that I will be able to withdraw my data up to July 2012.
- I consent to the processing of my personal information for the purposes explained to me. I understand that such information will be treated in accordance with the terms of the Data Protection Act 1998.
- I note that confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained and it will not be possible to identify any participants from any publications.

Participant's Statement:

[redacted]

agree that the research project named above has been explained to me to my satisfaction and I agree to take part in the study. I have read both the notes written above and the Information Sheet about the project, and understand what the research study involves.

[redacted] 21.7.10

A.6 Consent Form for Parents (version 1)

[redacted]

CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS IN RESEARCH STUDIES

KING'S College LONDON
University of London

Please complete this form after you have read the Information Sheet and/or listened to an explanation about the research.

Title of Study: 'The Classroom Practices of Year 1 children learning to read and write.'

King's College Research Ethics Committee Ref: REP(EM)/09/10-45

- Thank you for considering taking part in this research.
- The researcher has explained her research project to me before asking me to consent to taking part.
- I have been given an opportunity to ask questions arising from the Information Sheet. I have been given a copy of this Consent Form to keep and refer to at any time. I understand that if I have any questions about the research I can ask the researcher.
- I understand that if I decide at any time during the research that I no longer wish for my child or myself to participate in this project, I can notify the researchers involved and withdraw from it immediately without giving any reason. Furthermore, I understand that I will be able to withdraw my data up to July 2012.
- I consent to the processing of my personal information for the purposes explained to me. I understand that such information will be treated in accordance with the terms of the Data Protection Act 1998.
- I agree that the research team may access my child's academic records for the purposes of this research project.
- I note that confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained and it will not be possible to identify any participants from any publications.

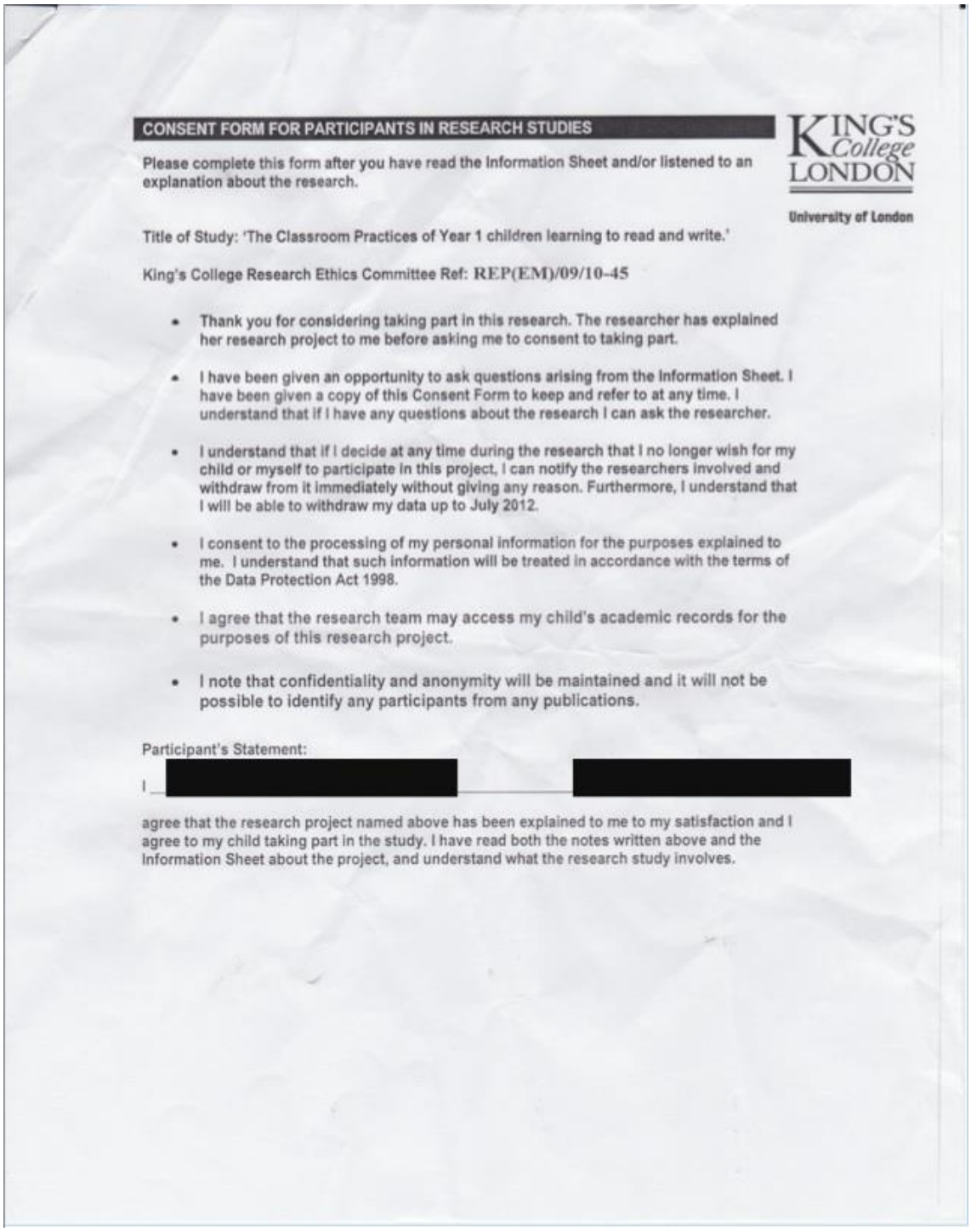
Participant's Statement:

I [redacted]

agree that the research project named above has been explained to me to my satisfaction and I agree to my child taking part in the study. I have read both the notes written above and the Information Sheet about the project, and understand what the research study involves.

Child's name: [redacted]

A.7 Consent form for parents (version 2)



CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS IN RESEARCH STUDIES

KING'S College LONDON
University of London

Please complete this form after you have read the Information Sheet and/or listened to an explanation about the research.

Title of Study: 'The Classroom Practices of Year 1 children learning to read and write.'

King's College Research Ethics Committee Ref: REP(EM)/09/10-45

- Thank you for considering taking part in this research. The researcher has explained her research project to me before asking me to consent to taking part.
- I have been given an opportunity to ask questions arising from the Information Sheet. I have been given a copy of this Consent Form to keep and refer to at any time. I understand that if I have any questions about the research I can ask the researcher.
- I understand that if I decide at any time during the research that I no longer wish for my child or myself to participate in this project, I can notify the researchers involved and withdraw from it immediately without giving any reason. Furthermore, I understand that I will be able to withdraw my data up to July 2012.
- I consent to the processing of my personal information for the purposes explained to me. I understand that such information will be treated in accordance with the terms of the Data Protection Act 1998.
- I agree that the research team may access my child's academic records for the purposes of this research project.
- I note that confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained and it will not be possible to identify any participants from any publications.

Participant's Statement:

I [redacted]

agree that the research project named above has been explained to me to my satisfaction and I agree to my child taking part in the study. I have read both the notes written above and the Information Sheet about the project, and understand what the research study involves.

A.8 Fieldnote accounts of obtaining informed consent

Securing informed consent – the first few weeks

On receipt of the letter in Appendix A.2 (above) the head teacher gave verbal consent to the research. The fieldnotes below demonstrate her full support for the work, in particular the references to the school's communication with the parents regarding the research. The consent forms and information sheets were initially sent home by the school prior to my first visit. The date on which the parents/carers signed was not included on the consent forms; however my fieldnotes offer a timeframe for when these forms were completed by the parents (see examples below). Although I did make fieldnotes from my earliest visits, I collected no digital data until all the consent forms had been returned.

Fieldnote extracts referring to informed consent

Introducing myself to the parents 09/09/2010

> 'The Head had told the parents …[of the children that I would be studying]… that, if they had a query about the research, I would be in the playground from 8.30 to answer any questions. Only one parent has any questions. She wanted to know what the research was about, who would read the research and who would view the video data. I explain about wanting to know what children are doing in literacy lessons, that people at the university will see and hear the data. She asks if she can read the thesis and I say yes'.
>
> [Fieldnotes 09/09/2010]

NB – the parent did not follow up the request to view the data.

Introducing myself to the children 09/09/2010

The class teacher has asked me to explain my research to the children.

> Several…[children]… have seen me in the playground and one or two have already asked who I am. The children shuffle round to face me. I say good morning and they respond 'Good Morning Miss Henning'. As I start my explanation, I realise I have cut them off in the middle and ask them to try again. This time they continue in unison. 'Good Morning Miss Henning, Good Morning everybody.' [The class teacher] quickly explains that this is a school thing. I tell the children I am there because I am interesting in watching how well they are learning, thus hitting on what appears to be a key word for the school (learning). I ask if this is OK and they chorus yes.
>
> [Fieldnotes 09/09/2010]

The class teacher's active role in securing consent

The class teacher spoke individually to most parents about the research during the school's 'soft start' time, when the parents accompanied their children into the classroom for fifteen minutes before school began. Most consent forms were signed following her explanations, as these extracts from my fieldnotes show:

> [The class teacher]…is pleased about the consent forms. She takes the list of children and begins writing the names of those who have not returned them on the top of the form. She sends me to the photocopy room to make enough copies.
> …
> When I return the children and parents are entering the room. [The class teacher]…has grabbed a parent and is explaining the research. 'This is the lady…' she says as I come in. I smile and reiterate that names will be changed and the name and location of the school will be withheld. [The class teacher]… continues to grab parents. I speak to one Mum about the use of video and say she will have the chance to watch any videos of the class. She smiles at the idea that she could see what her son gets up to in school.
>
> [Fieldnotes 30/09/2010]

The following extract also demonstrates the interest some of the children took in the research, in particular the digital recording equipment:

> As I am looking at the models [the children have created] … [the class teacher]…begins to talk to a parent about my research, explaining the use of video and so on. The parent signs the form; I introduce myself and explain who I am.
>
> Christopher…[one of the children]… asks if I have brought my video camera. I explain I will be doing so next week. I say I have brought my Dictaphone. We go across to my bag to look at it. I explain that it helps me remember when I talk to children.
>
> [07/10/201]

By 14th October all the consent forms for Amber Class had been returned. This meant that I could now collect digital as well as fieldnote data. Only one child's parents refused permission so any video data or photographs that that child inadvertently strayed into were blurred and the child was not included in data analysis. Children from other classes occasionally strayed into the videos, such incidents were followed up by conversation with their parents or carers about the research and consent was obtained.

Explaining the digital recording devices

As each piece of recording equipment was introduced it was explained to the children as the following extract demonstrates.

14th October 2010

> The parents leave. I photograph the children on the carpet for the first time. [The class teacher]… explains to them why I am doing this. At several points in the morning I ask if the presence of the…[video]… camera and my moving around with it is disruptive, [the class teacher]…feels that they children are 'flittery' initially (end of morning discussion) but that they will settle as they get used to it. Certainly there is a lot of evidence today of children being aware of the camera, particularly Colin, who worked out he was being watched in the first of my observations and has been hyper aware of my presence since.
>
> [14/10/2010]

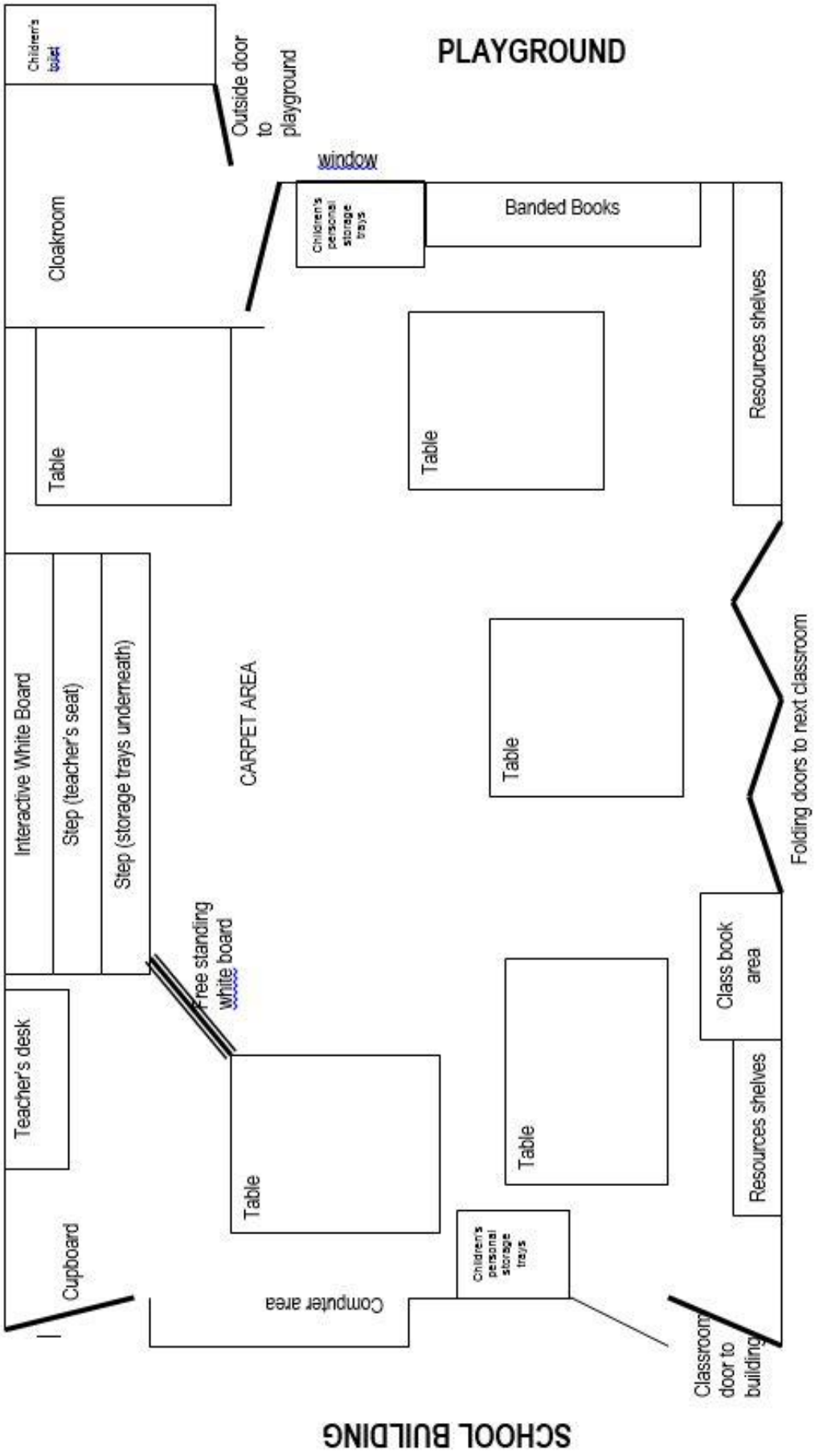
Supply (cover) teachers

Sometimes a supply teacher from a teaching agency was with the class to cover the class teacher's absence. If the class teacher's absence was expected on that day, I did not visit the school. However, if there was a last minute substitution my research was always explained to the covering teacher and my observations, as usual, focused on the children rather than the teacher's practice. The supply teacher's name was never included in the fieldnotes s/he was not included in other digital data.

An example of my seeking verbal consent from a supply teacher is included below:

> I explain to the supply teacher who I am, and she is OK with me staying in the class. At first she wonders if I will be distracting, but I explain that I come every week and the children are used to me.
>
> [Fieldnotes 20/10/2010]

Appendix B. **Diagram of Amber Classroom layout**



Appendix C. **Tables of digital data**

Explanatory notes are included at the end of each table.

Audio Data 1 - Interview				
Date	**Participants**	**Context**	**Starting Subject**	**Duration**
Term 1 – September to December 2010				
30/09/2010	Colin	seated at table in shared area	Post Lesson	00.03.28
07/10/2010	Colin	walk to photocopier	Post Lesson	00.04.47
07/10/2010	Colin, Jessica, Saira	interview room	What is learning	00.06.58 (Part 1)
				00.06.51 (Part 2)
21/10/2010	Bertha, Veronica	top of stairs to school offices	Pirate Outfits	00.04.33
08/11/2010	Colin, (Other classes) Octavia, Fouzia	interview room	RWI lesson (14/10/2010 see below)	00.28.12 (Part 1)
				00.04.15 (Part 2)
25/11/2010	Sophia and Veronica	interview room	Post lesson interview	00.10.56 (Part 1)
				00.01.09 (Part 2)
09/12/2010	Dean and Jessica	school hall	Post RWI interview	00.04.42(Part 1)
				00.00.32 (Part 2)
				00.00.25 (Part 3)
16/12/2010	?	in line on way back from carol concert	Did you enjoy that?	00.01.11
16/12/2010	Sophia	walk to photocopier	Sophia's letter to Santa	00.09.50
Term 2 January to April 2011				
21/01/2011	Callum	walk to photocopier	Post lesson interview	00.15.42
27/01/2011	Amina	school hall	Discussing work	00.05.37 (part 1)
				00.04.09 (Part 2)
				00.08.34 (Part 3)
04/02/2011	India and Colin	walk to photocopier	Discussing assessment session	00.18.00
04/02/2011	Amina	in class	Who chooses helping hands	00.04.33
18/02/2011	Dean	walk to photocopier	Post lesson interview	00.18.22
03/03/2011	Veronica	classroom at playtime	Post lesson interview	00.04.02
03/03/2011	India (with Veronica's contributions)	classroom at playtime	Pictures (follow up from interview 04/02/2011, above)	00.10.30
10/03/2011	Andrew and Amina	walk to photocopier	Post lesson interview	00.05.56 (Part 1)
				00.11.45 (Part 2)
10/03/2011	Lee, Liban and Jessica	classroom	Post lesson interview	00.00.40
17/03/2011	Bertha	shared area (playtime)	How was your morning	00.20.23
17/03/2011	Martin	shared area (playtime)	How was your morning	00.08.24

17/03/2011	Colin	shared area (playtime)	How was your morning	00.02.42
17/03/2011	Bertha and Veronica	classroom at lunchtime	How was your morning	00.15.42
01/04/2011	Christopher	classroom at playtime	Watching the literacy lesson video back	00.01.12
07/04/2011	Alison and Rani	shared area (playtime)	Post lesson interview	00.09.40
Term 3 – May to July 2011				
12/05/2011	Jane	shared area (new photocopier)	Photocopying work	00.04.58
16/06/2011	Christopher	steps outside hall	1 to 1 reading session	00.07.03
16/06/2011	Dean and Andrew	shared area (new photocopier)	How was your morning?	00.02.50
01/07/2011	Martin, Dean, Bertha and ?	classroom at playtime, shared area	How was the rehearsal	00.02.30

Notes:

a) **Post lesson** means immediately after a formal literacy lesson that was the focus of the discussion.

b) **Interview room** refers to a room in the school designated for meetings with parents.

c) **Walk to photocopier** refers to times where the children accompanied me to the school offices to use the photocopier.

d) **In class** refers to interviews which took place when the class was in session.

e) **Playtime** means the majority of the children were outside the school building in the playground during their break.

f) **Shared area** refers to an area outside the classroom but inside the school building that was used by all three Year 1 classes.

Audio Data 2 – Naturally Occurring				
Term 1 – September to December 2010				
Date	Participants	Activity	Video?	Duration
05/11/2010	Jessica - Microphone	Literacy lesson	Y	01.02.33
19/11/2010	Christopher - Microphone	Literacy lesson	Y	00.15.35
25/11/2010	Jane, Donna, Martin	Spelling test	N	00.18.14
25/11/2010	Martin, Veronica	Reading during RWI	N	00.15.23
09/12/2010	Sophia, Charanpal, Alison, India, Bertha, Daniella	Guided Reading (led by researcher)	N	00.19.05
09/12/2010	Bertha and Daniella	Teaching researcher Slovak and Polish	N	00.01.08
09/12/2010	Dean and Jessica	Spelling test	N	00.18.16
09/12/2010	Dean and Jessica	RWI lesson	N	00.16.40
16/12/2010	Daniella, Sophia and Alison	Making rhyming words during guided reading	N	00.22.12
16/12/2010	Liam, Rani, Meena?, Callum?	Guided Reading (led by researcher) no additional notes	N	00.23.00
Term 2 January to April 2011				
21/01/2011	Bertha, India, Alison	Maths test	N	00.23.16
27/01/2011	Martin, ?	Spelling test (led by researcher)	N	00.18.59
27/01/2011	Amina and India	Literacy Lesson	N	00.04.37
04/02/2011	Saira, Veronica, Arun, Christopher and ?	Writing assessment session	N	00.47.04
10/02/2011	Daniella - Microphone	Literacy lesson	Y	01.01.51
18/02/2011	Dean - Microphone	Literacy lesson	N	00.59.17
03/03/2011	Veronica - Microphone	Literacy lesson	N	00.24.54
10/03/2011	Dean and Veronica	Spelling test	N	00.23.26
10/03/2011	Saira and Veronica	Literacy lesson	N	00.27.45
17/03/2011	Rani, Karen, Amina, Liban	Handwriting lesson	N	00.07.06
17/03/2011	Dean - Microphone	Spelling test	N	00.10.46
17/03/2011	Rani, Bertha, India, Karen, Charanpal, Sophia, Alison	Literacy lesson (table activity)	N	00.14.45
01/04/2011	India, Bertha, Charanpal, Penny, Daniella	Guided Reading (led by researcher)	N	00.07.50
01/04/2011	Liban	Spelling test	N	00.11.05
01/04/2011	Veronica, India, Ben, Amina, Meena	Literacy lesson (group work)	Y	00.21.29
07/04/2011	Whole Class	Literacy lesson	N	00.26.55
07/04/2011	Rani, Daniella, Penny, Charanpal	Literacy lesson (group work)	N	00.36.49
Term 3 – May to July 2011				
06/05/2011	Veronica, Karen, Dean, Andrew, Amina, Liban then Whole Class	Literacy lesson (initial group + whole class)	Y	00.31.14
06/05/2011	Jessica, Donna, Jane, Martin, Liam	Literacy lesson (group work)	Y	00.53.21
12/05/2011	Donna, Jessica, Callum, Martin	Guided Reading (led by researcher)	N	00.17.49
12/05/2011	Donna, Martin	Spelling test	N	00.08.43

12/05/2011	Meena, Lee	Retelling 3 Billy Goats (Literacy Lesson)	N	00.04.02
12/05/2011	Meena, Lee, Rani, Jane	Sorting out roles for 3 Billy Goats (Literacy lesson)	N	00.01.59
19/05/2011	Alison, Jessica	Spelling test	N	01.03.16
	Donna, Saira, Jane, Sophia, Amina, Veronica	Literacy lesson (on same recording as spelling lesson, above)	N	as above
09/06/2011	Andrew, Colin, Jessica, Bertha, Christopher	Literacy lesson (group work)	Y	00.22.45
16/06/2011	Jessica, Callum, Donna, Martin	Guided Reading (led by researcher)	N	00.18.24
16/06/2011	Bertha- Microphone	Literacy lesson	N	00.39.58
08/07/2011	Martin, Liam, Donna, Jessica, Jane	Literacy Lesson part 1 (drawing)	N	00.43.51
08/07/2011	Martin, Liam, Donna, Jessica, Jane	Literacy lesson part 2 (independent writing)	Y	00.22.21
20/07/2011	Whole class	Data collection session (children wrote about literacy)	N	01.20.27

Notes:

a) **Led by researcher** means that I (Lucy) was taking the teaching role.

b) **Microphone** means an individual child was wearing/carrying a microphone. Other children's presence on the recording depended on their proximity to that child so the participants varied.

Video Data 1 - Interview			
Term 2 - January to April 2011			
Date	**Participants**	**Activity**	**Duration**
10/02/2011	Colin, Martin, Bertha	What helps you with literacy learning?	00.15.17 (Part 1)
			00.01.09 (Part 2)
01/04/2011	Veronica, Jessica, Christopher	Post lesson interview	00.09.25
Term 3 – May to July 2011			
06/05/2011	Donna, Liam, Meena	Post lesson interview	00.12.34

Video Data 2 – Naturally Occurring				
Term 1 – September to December 2010				
Date	**Participants**	**Activity**	**Additional Audio?**	**Duration**
14/10/2010	Whole Class	Register Singing	N	00.07.49
14/10/2010	Colin - Microphone	RWI lesson	N	00.31.37
05/11/2010	Jessica - Microphone	Literacy Lesson	Y	00.59.20
19/11/2012	Christopher - Microphone	Literacy Lesson	Y	00.57.57
Term 2 January to April 2011				
10/02/2011	Daniella - Microphone	Literacy Lesson	Y	00.19.46
10/03/2011	Amina - Microphone	Literacy Lesson	N	00.37.00
01/04/2011	Whole Class	Literacy Lesson	Y (Group work)	00.40.25
Term 3 – May to July 2011				
06/05/2011	Whole Class (Group - Jessica, Donna, Jane, Martin, Liam)	Literacy Lesson	Y (Group work)	00.51.41
09/06/2011	Whole class (Group Andrew, Colin, Jessica, Bertha, Christopher)	Literacy lesson	Y	00.12.56 (Part 1)
				00.12.04 (Part 2)
				00.11.51 (Part 3)
08/07/2011	Whole class (Group Liam, Martin, Jessica, Jane, Donna)	Literacy lesson	Y	00.37.19

Notes:

a) **Register singing** refers to a session where the children sang the morning roll call.

b) Group work means additional audio was collected for the small group portion of the lesson only and not the whole class session.

c) **Microphone** means an individual child was wearing/carrying a microphone. Other children's presence on the recording depended on their proximity to that child, so the participants varied.

Appendix D. **Example of a child's fieldnotes**

The fieldnotes above were made by Meena on19/06/2011. They refer to a roughly half an hour period in the classroom before the beginning of the school day. This period began with the class' 'soft start' session where the parents/carers and children read together in the classroom before the register was taken at the beginning of the official school day. The fieldnotes end with the start of a lesson concerning mini-beasts. Places where Meena has referred to children and adults by name have been covered and replace with printed text using the pseudonyms from the thesis. I have represented her crossing out by striking through the printed text.

Below is a transcript of Meena's text. It includes annotations in bold text in square brackets to make her meaning clearer:

[Soft start, parents/carers and children are reading together seated at the tables around the classroom]…Jane is talking to Miss and she's reading with Granny. Andrew is sitting down and Rani she is looking at me. Callum is putting his hand up. Barry is putting his hand on his nose and Alison. Barry is reading with a parent helper. Rani is talking to Miss…**[The class have gathered and moved on the carpet. The parents/carers have left at this point]…**Miss is talking to everybody. Everybody is looking at Miss and the board. Dean is putting his bag away. **[The class have been given their literacy workbooks and are beginning the handwriting lesson]…** Everybody has their book and they're standing up**….[the children are being sent to their tables]…** Jessica is writing the date and she's writings 'Bs' **…[practising handwriting lines of the letter 'b']…** and she's putting her hand up in her bs she's done three mistakes. She's smiling at me. Miss said to Penny write neatly. Pineapples**…[a group of children]…** are talking. Miss talking to a parent helper. **[The class have moved back to the carpet and are beginning the next lesson]…**Now we were talking about mini beasts. We were looking at the caterpillar. We were doing the apple. We thinked of smelly and disgraceful and disgusting. **[The class are thinking of words to describe the mini-beasts]**

Appendix E. **Sample of a narrative transcription**

	Jessica seems to be writing 'I am five years old' Donna glances towards the carpet and then back down at her writing book again. Jessica says 'I am' and looks towards Deena, saying 'am' 'am' and smiling as she does so. Jessica looks back down at her book and continues to write, saying 'am' 'am'. Donna looks up and looks towards the carpet area, then to her right before looking down at her writing again. Jessica continues to write and say sounds and individual words. Donna glances towards the carpet and back down at her work. Jessica starts saying /yuh/ /yuh/ /yuh/. She glances towards the camera then towards Donna's work. Donna continues to look towards the carpet and back as Jessica begins to say 'old'	
46.34	The sentence 'I am five years old' on the fourth line down from the picture seems to have been written between 45.36 and 46.34	

Above is a screen capture of part of a detailed transcription that I produced in the process of analysing the moment by moment unfolding of Jessica's participation in a

schooled literacy lesson on 05/11/2010. The numbers in the left hand column refer to the video timing. The right hand column contains screenshots from the video of the lesson. For the purposes of analysis the separate audio and video recordings were synchronised.

In order to create this narrative transcription, I drew on the more detailed transcriptions of the spoken interactions that I had already created using the Transana software. The transcription thus incorporates a description of what I had selected as relevant on the video and audio recordings. I also played and replayed these recordings as I compiled the transcript reproduced in part above.

Jessica's process of text production was tracked with reference to both video and audio recordings. As I only had a photocopy of the completed text, I compared the text with the unfolding events in the digital recordings in order to gain an idea of which parts of the text related to particular stretches of interaction. In the transcription above, I have annotated the completed text to conceal the parts that Jessica could plausibly be judged not to have written at the point of the literacy lesson described in the transcription.

The production of a transcript such as this would often lead to the production of further transcripts which focused more closely on particular aspects of the data, for example a more detailed transcription of the unfolding interaction at key moments.

Writing assessment guidelines: levels 1 and 2

Pupil name _____ Class/Group _____ Date _____

	AF5 – vary sentences for clarity, purpose and effect	AF6 – write with technical accuracy of syntax and punctuation in phrases, clauses and sentences	AF3 – organise and present whole texts effectively, sequencing and structuring information, ideas and events	AF4 – construct paragraphs and use cohesion within and between paragraphs	AF1 – write imaginative, interesting and thoughtful texts	AF2 – produce texts which are appropriate to task, reader and purpose	AF7 – select appropriate and effective vocabulary	AF8 – use correct spelling	*Handwriting and presentation*
Level 2	**In some forms of writing:** ▪ some variation in sentence openings, *e.g. not always starting with name or pronoun* ▪ mainly simple sentences with *and* used to connect clauses ▪ past and present tense generally consistent	**In some forms of writing:** ▪ clause structure mostly grammatically correct ▪ sentence demarcation with capital letters and full stops usually accurate ▪ some accurate use of question and exclamation marks, and commas in lists	**In some forms of writing:** ▪ some basic sequencing of ideas or material, *e.g. time-related words or phrases, line breaks, headings, numbers* ▪ openings and/or closings sometimes signalled	**In some forms of writing:** ▪ ideas in sections grouped by content, some linking by simple pronouns	**In some forms of writing:** ▪ mostly relevant ideas and content, sometimes repetitive or sparse ▪ some apt word choices create interest ▪ brief comments, questions about events or actions suggest viewpoint	**In some forms of writing:** ▪ some basic purpose established, *e.g. main features of story, report* ▪ some appropriate features of the given form used ▪ some attempts to adopt appropriate style	**In some forms of writing:** ▪ simple, often speech-like vocabulary conveys relevant meanings ▪ some adventurous word choices, *e.g. opportune use of new vocabulary*	**In some forms of writing:** ▪ usually correct spelling of: ○ high frequency grammatical function words ○ common single-morpheme content/lexical words ▪ likely errors: ○ inflected endings, *e.g. past tense, plurals, adverbs* ○ phonetic attempts at vowel digraphs	**In some forms of writing:** ▪ letters generally correctly shaped but inconsistencies in orientation, size and use of upper/lower case letters ▪ clear letter formation, with ascenders and descenders distinguished, generally upper and lower case letters not mixed within words
Level 1	**In some writing, usually with support:** ▪ reliance on simple phrases and clauses ▪ some sentence-like structures formed by chaining clauses together, *e.g. series of ideas joined by repeated use of 'and'*	**In some writing, usually with support:** ▪ mostly grammatically accurate clauses ▪ some awareness of use of full stops and capital letters, *e.g. beginning/end of sentence*	**In some writing, usually with support:** ▪ some formulaic phrases indicate start/end of text, *e.g. once upon a time, one day, the end* ▪ events/ideas sometimes in appropriate order, *e.g. actions listed in time sequence, items numbered*	**In some writing, usually with support:** ▪ simple connections between ideas, events, *e.g. repeated nouns, pronouns relate to main idea*	**In some writing, usually with support:** ▪ basic information and ideas conveyed through appropriate word choice, *e.g. relate to topic* ▪ some descriptive language, *e.g. colour, size, simple emotion*	**In some writing, usually with support:** ▪ some indication of basic purpose, particular form or awareness of reader, *e.g. story, label, message*	**In some writing, usually with support:** ▪ mostly simple vocabulary ▪ communicates meaning through repetition of key words	**In some writing, usually with support:** ▪ usually correct spelling of simple high-frequency words ▪ phonetically plausible attempts at words with digraphs and double letters ▪ sufficient number of recognisable words for writing to be readable, including, *e.g. use of letter names to approximate syllables and words*	**In some writing, usually with support:** ▪ most letters correctly formed and orientated ▪ spaces between words ▪ upper and lower case sometimes distinguished ▪ use of ICT, *e.g. use keyboard to type own name*
BL									
IE									

Overall assessment (tick one box only) Low 1 ☐ Secure 1 ☐ High 1 ☐ Low 2 ☐ Secure 2 ☐ High 2 ☐